

8. **Peace:** God invites us to make a trade with Him – *our troubles for His peace*. “...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7 ESV).
9. **Contentment:** When we desire this world we will never be satisfied, so God invites us to be content in knowing He is always with us. “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Hebrews 13:5 ESV).
10. **Readiness:** Someday Jesus will return, *possibly soon*; therefore, God works through His Word to keep us ready through Jesus. In fact, since each passing day is drawing us closer to Jesus’ return, we should be drawing closer to Jesus with each passing week. “...let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day [of Jesus’ return] drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV).

Our Response

Since God has *created* us, *saved* us, and *sustains* us day-by-day, He is worthy to receive our very best; therefore, we:

1. **Put God First:** Jesus told us to put spiritual things first, confident that He will provide whatever we need: “...seek

first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Mt. 6:33 ESV).

2. **Be Rich in God’s Word:** “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16 ESV).
3. **Be Equipped for Service:** Christ gave “...the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of [service]” (Eph. 4:11-12 ESV).
4. **Live for Christ:** Jesus “...died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Cor. 5:15 ESV).

Final Thoughts

What we do – *gathering or not gathering* – makes a huge statement to others. So let us gather to show we ♦believe the Bible and ♦trust in Jesus! The LORD commanded the Sabbath and Festival gatherings in the Old Testament, Jesus attended a synagogue each week, and New Testament Christians gathered together each week. So Christians *faithfully gather* and *gladly receive*; don’t miss out; see you in church!

You Are Invited to Attend and Benefit

Website: www.BLC7500.com

YouTube: “Benefit from the Bible”

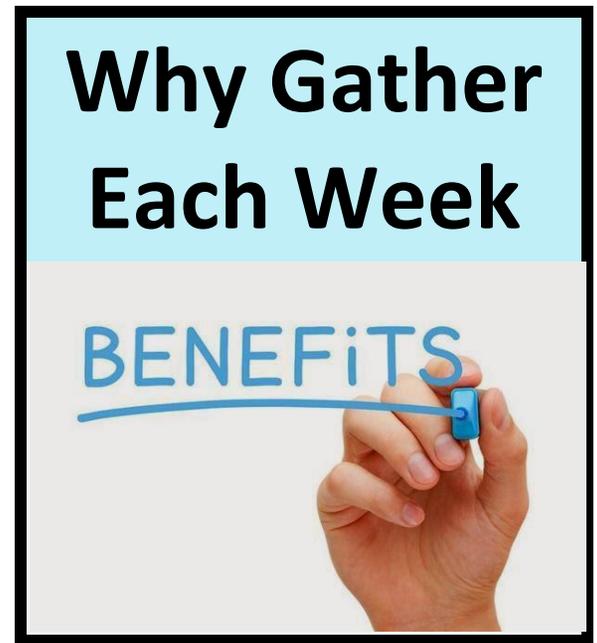
Facebook: “Bethlehem Parma”

Saturdays: Class 3:00; Service 4:00

Sundays: Service 9:00; Classes 10:30

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Introduction

Dear Friend: Life is busy, *no one can do it all*, so we do what we think is most important and let the rest go. However, as we are making such choices, it is *vital* to have a proper view of both time and eternity.

Blessed Now and Forever

The Bible teaches that God made us and provides what we need – *whether we acknowledge Him or not*. But for us to receive His blessings in eternity it is essential for us to:

1. **Agree** that we have sinned against God ([Psalm 51:4](#)).
2. **Understand** that our sins have separated us from God ([Isaiah 59:2](#)).
3. **Understand** that we are helpless to save ourselves ([Romans 3:20](#)).
4. **Be sorry** for our sins ([Psalm 32:5](#)).
5. **Understand** that Jesus:

- a. Lived in our place, as our perfect substitute ([Matthew 5:17](#)).
 - b. Took the punishment for all of our sins ([1 Peter 3:18](#)).
6. Receive God's gift of righteousness through faith in Jesus ([Romans 3:22](#)).

Then, *with Jesus as our Savior*, these wonderful changes have come into our lives:

1. All of our sins are forgiven!
2. We are at peace with God!
3. God is our Father and we are His holy children through Jesus!
4. We desire to learn the Bible.
5. The Holy Spirit is with us to help us understand and live the Bible!
6. We know our Heavenly Father will provide us with all that we need and take us to heaven when we die!

Benefits of Gathering

Receive These Amazing Blessings!

1. **Nourishment:** Now that we are alive in Christ, *thus spiritually alive*, it is essential to receive spiritual nourishment. Therefore, Jesus said: "[Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God](#)" ([Matthew 4:4 ESV](#)). So *physically* we need bread, *spiritually* we need the Bible! God works through His Word, *by the Holy Spirit*, to ✦focus us on Jesus ([John 5:39](#)), ✦grow us in His truth ([John 8:31-32](#)), ✦strengthen us for Christ-like living ([Romans 16:25](#)), and ✦guide us to follow His will in our daily Christian lives ([Psalm 119:105](#)).

2. **Blessings:** We are privileged to gather and receive from God. Some see their gathering as *giving* to God, but – *at Bethlehem* – our primary emphasis is on *receiving* from God through Word and Sacrament. God knows of our many needs, so He comes to us to richly bless us!
3. **Forgiveness:** The Pastor stands in the stead (*in the place*) of his Lord Jesus Christ declaring God's very forgiveness to all whom God has made sorry for their sins and given faith to trust in Jesus Christ for eternal life. Jesus said: "[If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them...](#)" ([John 20:23 ESV](#)).
4. **Truth:** When we gather, we are reminded about the reality of our sin, *but we are also reminded about the reality of Jesus' saving work to remove our sin*. Therefore, God's uses His Law and Gospel to keep us *sad* about our sins and *glad* about our Savior! Without God's regular work through His Word, we may begin to base our entrance into heaven on us rather than on our Lord Jesus Christ.
5. **Assurance:** As Christians we live to honor our Savior, but our confidence for heaven is never in any good we have done, nor in any bad we have avoided. "[I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life](#)" ([1 John 5:13 ESV](#)). We have eternal life, and we *know* we have eternal life, because, *by God's grace*, we believe in Jesus as our Savior! God took wonderful action for us through Holy Baptism:

"...in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" ([Galatians 3:26-27 ESV](#)).

6. **Sacrament:** In a way that is beyond our comprehension, the Lord gives us His very body and blood, *under the means of bread and wine*, for our forgiveness. These words tell us the essence of the Lord's Supper: "[...as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.'](#) And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" ([Matthew 26:26-28 ESV](#)). As physical blood is essential for our physical lives, Jesus invites us to faithfully receive His body and blood for our eternal benefit!
7. **Encouragement:** As we live day by day, life can be discouraging as we see the world slip further and further into sin. Therefore, it is a blessing to gather for mutual fellowship, encouragement, and support. At a time in Elijah's life when he thought he was the only one on earth who had not worshiped false gods, the LORD greatly encouraged him with the news that 7,000 others in Israel were also holding to God's truth!