

**Why Are We Here?**  
**Feast of Tabernacles**  
**Rick Railston**  
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We ask: Why are we here? It's because of God's calling, His mercy and His favor that He has given each one of us, and what a joy it is.

I remember Loma Armstrong's favorite scripture. Mr. Armstrong said many times, it was Psalm 133:1. David said:

***Psalm 133:1.** Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (KJV)*

What a concept in this world today. Here in Kellogg over the past six years, all of the brethren have tried their very best to have that unity and that pleasant experience that David talked about.

As we begin the Feast here in 2014, let's look back in times past for just a second because at every Feast of Tabernacles that I went to where Mr. Armstrong attended, he would ask the question: "Why are we here?" Most of you remember that. It's a very fundamental question. It's extremely important because we have to ask, why are we doing this? What is our motivation in being here and what do we want to accomplish when we are here? These are questions that should be answered, and we will do our best to answer them as we begin the Feast.

The title of the sermon is:

Why Are We Here?

We are going to talk about seven reasons why we are here. Hopefully this will set the stage going forward.

**Reason No.1. We are here because we are commanded to be here.**

Turn to Leviticus 23:33. The God of the Old Testament (Christ) is talking to Moses.

***Leviticus 23:33.** And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying,  
34) Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, the fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD.  
39) Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.*

*40) And you shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook... (KJV)*

We will see why in just a minute.

*40b) ... and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.*

*41) And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations: you shall celebrate it in the seventh month.*

*42) Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:*

*43) That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (KJV)*

They left a life of sin in Egypt and they left Egypt in hopes of having a better life under God in the Promised Land.

This Feast was also kept by the New Testament church.

***1 Corinthians 5:8.*** *Therefore let us keep the feast ... (KJV)*

He was referring specifically to the Days of Unleavened Bread, but it obviously applies to all of God's holy days, and we also note that the Feast is going to be kept in the millennium. Zechariah 14:16 tells us that all of those who are left from the nations that came up against Jerusalem shall go back to Jerusalem to worship the King and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

If you were like me and I think most of us were kind of in the same boat, most of us began to keep the commandments out of a sense of fear. We saw the Basil Wolverton drawings about all the ghastly things that were going on and we didn't want to be there and didn't want to experience that. So we were afraid of God's awesome wrath. We were afraid that we wouldn't go to the place of safety if we didn't obey. We were afraid that we would be denied eternal life if we didn't obey. So the motivation for us obeying in the start, and certainly for me, was abject fear. But over time, we began to realize two very fundamental issues that I didn't realize when I came into the church and I think most of you didn't realize either. The first thing we realize over time is that fear does not come from God.

Let's go to 2 Timothy 1:7. Paul is making this fundamental point to this young minister and it is something that we would do well to always, always remember. God has given us His holy spirit, but Paul is pointing out something about this spirit.

***2 Timothy 1:7.*** *For God has not given us the spirit of fear... (KJV)*

When we feel fear, it isn't coming from God.

*7b) ... but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (KJV)*

The Greek for “sound mind” means *self-control or self-discipline*. So God hasn’t given us a spirit of fear. It took me a few decades, fast learner that I am, to realize that in God’s Church. We see here that God does not want us to be motivated by fear. He wants us to be motivated by something else, something other than fear.

With that in mind, let’s go to 1 John 4:18. It shows us what our motivation should be in keeping God’s commandments and in being here today. The Apostle John was in the twilight of his years and he is looking back and he’s giving us a great deal of wisdom.

*1 John 4:18. There is no fear in love ... (KJV)*

Just like God hasn’t given us a spirit of fear, there’s no fear in love.

*18b) ... but perfect love casts out fear: because fear hath torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. (KJV)*

That tells us that the more love we have, the less fear we’re going to have. These two concepts, as I said, took me a few decades for it to sink in to the point that I finally got it. I think all of us at this point in time, certainly all of us here and listening in, are finally understanding this. Some of you probably arrived at it a lot sooner than I did.

Let’s go to 1 Corinthians 13 and look at the first three verses. This should be our motivation for obeying God’s commandments and for being here today. Read the scripture with the idea: Is this my motivation for being here? Is this my motivation for obeying God?

*1 Corinthians 13:1. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

*2) And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. (KJV)*

There’s so much emphasis on this other stuff, understanding mysteries, knowledge and prophecy. God says through Paul that if we don’t have love, that means absolutely nothing.

*3) And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing. (KJV)*

So the point is if I’m not continually motivated by the love of God, I will not be in God’s Kingdom. We’ve got to get that through our heads. I’m not going to be there if I am not motivated by God’s love.

So in this first point of why we are here, we are here because we are commanded. We have to get to the place that we want to obey God not because we have to, not because we are afraid, but because we love Him. On top of that we want to obey Him because we want to please Him and make Him happy, make Him happy with us.

John gives us incredible wisdom in just short sentences, one after the other after the other. We need to obey because we want to do it because we love Him and want to please Him.

**1 John 3:22.** *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him ... (KJV)*

Then he tells us why.

*22b) ... because we keep his commandments ... (KJV)*

Yes, we obey them.

*22 continued) ... and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (KJV)*

We do those things that are pleasing to God. Because we obey and please Him, when we pray, answers will come. If we obey Him and please Him because we love Him, answers will come.

Let's remember that God's plan of salvation as outlined in the holy days tell us how God would live if He was on this earth. We are here today to practice that way of life. We do so through the keeping of the holy days year by year.

So we are here today because we want to make God happy. We are here today in a selfish way because we want God to be happy with us. I want God to be happy with me. We are here today as little children because we want our Dad happy with us.

So the first point is that we are here because God commanded us, but we have to be very careful about our motivation for obeying. It's got to be from love.

## **Reason No. 2: We are here to come out of the world.**

We just read Leviticus 23:42 which said we have to live in booths seven days. The Hebrew word for "booths" is Strong's 5521, and it's the Hebrew word *sukkah*. The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament tells us that *sukkah* means *a tent or a temporary shelter*. Here in this beautiful complex we have temporary shelters. Of course, the ancient Israelites would be awestruck by the temporary shelters we have here compared with what they had. We should be thankful for this beautiful place and these beautiful dwellings we have.

Why does God want us to dwell in temporary dwellings? What is the point? What does He want us to learn about that?

Let's go to 2 Corinthians 6 and we'll read verses 14 through 18. Yes, Leviticus said it was to remind the Israelites that they dwelt in tents after they left Egypt, but for us there is another reminder. Paul is saying:

**2 Corinthians 6:14.** *Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

*15) And what concord has Christ with Belial? or what part has he that believes with an infidel? (KJV)*

An infidel is one who does not believe in God at all.

*16) and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (KJV)*

What He is saying is, "Since I am living in you, why do you want to have fellowship with an infidel or Belial."

*17) Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing ... (KJV)*

Here He is referencing Isaiah 52:11.

*17b) ... and I will receive you. (KJV)*

*18) And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. (KJV)*

Then, of course, this concept is repeated again in Revelation 18:4 where we are told to "Come out of her, My people that you don't be partakers of her sins and you don't receive of her plagues."

So throughout the Bible we are told to come out and be separate whether in the Old Testament Israel or with spiritual Israel today.

Yet Paul gives us a dose of reality about how we do that. Many people take these scriptures and they live in communes or they go up on hilltops in monasteries and nunneries and all of that.

Let's go to 1 Corinthians 5 and read verses 9 and 10. There is an eastern orthodox nunnery about sixty-five miles from our house. It's a good motorcycle ride. They have an espresso stand and so I stop and see these young ladies in their black habits. Most of them are pretty dour and sour looking, but occasionally you can get a smile out of them.

**1 Corinthians 5:9.** *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:*

*10) Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must you needs go out of the world. (KJV)*

He said, "I don't want you to be part of the world, but you can't just leave the world." That's not what God wants from us. How can we exhibit character if we're hunkered down in a cave on a mountaintop? So we see by these two scriptures that we're not to be part of this world despite the fact that we live in the world. That is where we develop character, not being part of the world yet having to live in the world.

The point is that with everything we do all year long, this is likely as close as we will get to coming out of the world here at the Feast of Tabernacles. We have temporary dwellings, we're all together and for eight days we have the opportunity to come out of the world. We're in temporary dwellings, more away from the world than we are at most times and we're away from the day-to-day living in this Satan inspired world. We are away from the cares and concerns of this life, from job problems and financial problems. Hopefully we are away from the T.V. and the internet and we don't have to deal with the leaky faucet or the deck that needs to be fixed. We don't have to deal with a cranky boss or irate neighbor. For our students, they don't have to deal with school exams, they don't have to write papers. They are away from the world. While we are here, we should do our best to put the cares of this world out of our minds and just draw that curtain.

Christ said so in Matthew 6:31-34. I'll read it from the New King James. In Christ's first sermon He brings up this subject about us being overly concerned, and it applies here at the Feast more than any other time of the year.

**Matthew 6:31.** *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'*

*32) For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (NKJV)*

God is not oblivious to that. He knows what we need.

*33) But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [that we're concerned about and we worry about and wring our hands about] shall be added to you. (NKJV)*

So we are here to seek God's Kingdom and to put out of our minds the day-to-day cares of the world.

*34) Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (NKJV)*

Christ says, "I want you to put these everyday concerns on the shelf for eight days. Can you do that for Me? Just put them on the shelf and focus on why we are supposed to be here and focus on rejoicing before Me."

I realize that many of you have difficulties waiting back home. I understand that, but let's ask God to help us focus on these eight wonderful days and let's let tomorrow take care of itself.

That's the second point. We are to come out of the world.

### **Reason No. 3. We are here because the church is a refuge.**

I know for many of you, that always has not been the case. The church hasn't always been a refuge.

Listen to this concept. First, God and Christ are our refuge. We need to establish that fact. Turn to Psalms 91. Before everything, God and Christ are our refuge. They are the ultimate refuge for us. This is such beautiful language that God inspired David to write.

***Psalm 91:1.** He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

*2) I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress ... (KJV)*

God is and Christ is.

*2b) ... my God; in him will I trust.*

*3) Surely he shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.*

*4) He shall cover you with his feathers, and under his wings shall you trust... (KJV)*

Like a mother hen or eagle protecting the little chicks.

*4b) ... his truth shall be your shield and buckler.*

*5) You shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flies by day;*

*6) Nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday.*

*7) A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you*

*8) Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked. (KJV)*

Why?

9) *Because you have made the LORD, which is my refuge [and therefore your refuge], even the most High, your habitation; (KJV)*

We live with God. God lives inside of us. He and Jesus Christ are our refuge. Think about this: God and Christ are our refuge, but the church is the very body of Jesus Christ. So since God is our refuge and the church is the body of Christ, therefore, the church is a refuge too. It certainly should be a refuge. All of us have a part in making the church a refuge here at the Feast, in Elkhart, wherever God's true Christians are gathered together. We have our part to play in making the church a refuge for everybody else here. For the church to be a refuge, you have to have a positive atmosphere, you have to have a welcoming atmosphere. We need an uplifting atmosphere for the church to be a refuge.

So let's remember that we're here not to look back but to look forward and we're here to picture the world tomorrow and we're here because the church is a refuge for all of us. It is a refuge God and Christ have provided for each one of us, therefore, let us do our part in making the church a refuge for everyone here.

That was the third point; the church has to be a refuge.

**Reason No. 4. We are here because likeminded brethren tend to come together.**

*Amos 3:3. Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (KJV)*

Likeminded people tend to gravitate together.

One of the reasons God has allowed the church to split and re-split and re-split over the last several decades is so that likeminded people can come together. It allows likeminded people the freedom to go with other likeminded people.

A key scripture in understanding this concept we find in 1 Corinthians 11:19. This answers the question where people say: "Why so many splits? How can this be God's church? Before it's all over, we'll all come back together and circle the wagons and hold hands and sing Coom By Ya around the fire." Folks, it's not going to happen. Here Paul tells us why.

*1 Corinthians 11:19. For there must be also heresies ... (KJV)*

The Greek word can also mean *divisions* because they go together. He says there must be divisions, there must be heresies.

*19b) ... among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest [apparent] among you. (KJV)*

The Greek word for "approved" is dokimos and it was primarily used to refer to coinage. So if a coin was dokimos, it meant it was the proper weight and it had the proper



amount of precious materials in it and it was assayed by an expert to be a legitimate coin of a legitimate value, therefore, it was dokimos.

So Paul is saying that there will be divisions and heresies so that those who are legitimate Christians, like referring to legitimate coins, those who are legitimate Christians will be apparent. You will see and know.

The New English Bible says: "*For dissensions are necessary if only to show which of your members are sound.*" Divisions are necessary if only to show which of your members are sound.

So after these splits and re-splits, God is watching us, all of His people all over the world. Some He is watching go over here to worship a man. Some He is watching go over there to do a work. Some He is watching go over there to love Him with all their heart, to love their neighbor as themselves. So it is a very important concept. We have to understand that He is watching us to see where we place ourselves, because likeminded people tend to come together.

Here is a very important concept that we have to drill into our mind. As we become more like Christ, we will all become more likeminded. It's inevitable and it's got to happen. You see, you have Christ up here at the top. All of us are down here. We have our conservatives over here and our liberal Christians over here at one end of the spectrum of all God's people. We have the gregarious ones over here and the wall flowers over here, and then we have the prickly ones over here and the soft ones over here. We have this big spectrum of God's people. But if Christ is here, and we are looking to Jesus Christ and maybe you're the prickly one over here or the soft one over here, guess what? As you become more like Jesus Christ, you're walking up that path closer to Him. Guess what is happening? We're getting closer and closer together, aren't we? We are getting more like Jesus Christ. The prickly one gets a little softer and then maybe the mushy one gets a little firmer until we become exactly in the image of Jesus Christ. We get closer and closer together.

We're here to demonstrate a Christ-like mind and to demonstrate Christ-like deeds. Hopefully while we are here, all of us will grow closer together, not just because we know each other better, but because we are also becoming more like Jesus Christ.

So let's understand that we are here because like-minded people are coming together. We are here because we want to be like Jesus Christ.

### **Reason No. 5. We are to be fed.**

I'm here to be fed and you're here to be fed. It never ceases to amaze me that one of the clearest scriptures in the Bible has been one of the most ignored over the years.

Let's go to John 21 and see that. This has been ignored for decades and continues to be ignored today. We don't want to do that. We're breaking into the context here. This

is after Christ's resurrection and Peter said, "Hey, I'm going fishing." He didn't know what else to do. So several of the apostles went with him and they cast their nets on one side of the boat and they got nothing.

Christ was on the shore and said, "Hey, do you have something to eat?"

Peter said, "No, we haven't caught anything."

Christ said, "Throw the net on the other side."

They did and it was so full that they could hardly lift it up. They got the fish on shore and cooked a meal. We're breaking into the context in verse 15.

**John 21:15.** *So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me more than these? He said unto him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He said unto him, Feed my lambs. (KJV)*

A straight command. Three words. No ambiguity.

*16) He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me? He said unto him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. [Peter is getting a bit nervous now probably] He said unto him, Feed my sheep.*

*17) He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, do you love me? ... (KJV)*

Of course, by this time Peter had a knot in his stomach and he was grieved because Christ said it to him three times, "Do you love Me?"

*17b) ... And he said unto him, Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you. Jesus said unto him, Feed my sheep. (KJV)*

It can't get any clearer. God usually in the Bible puts things in two times for emphasis. This time He put it in three times and yet it has been ignored too much.

This scripture defines a minister's job, physically certainly, but especially spiritually to nourish the brethren. It's a very simple concept. To nourish the brethren. But it was prophesied long ago that there would be a problem with this. It was prophesied long ago that it wasn't going to happen as much as it should.

Let's go to Ezekiel 34 and read the first two verses. We probably know these by heart. Ezekiel was looking forward under God's inspiration saying that not all of these shepherds are going to feed the sheep. Not all of these shepherds are going to be concerned for somebody other than themselves.

**Ezekiel 34:1.** *And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,  
2) Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel ... (KJV)*

I've heard some people say that this applies only to Ancient Israel. No. We know, and that's a sermon unto itself, that we are spiritual Israel, so it applies on a spiritual level to all of us, the New Testament church.

*2b) ... prophesy, and say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves!*

He says, "Shame on you because your primary motivation is you, not the flock you have been entrusted with.

*2 continued) ... should not the shepherds feed the flocks? (KJV)*

Of course, the answer is obviously, yes.

Let's go to one of my favorite scriptures in John 10 which picks up this concept of feeding the flock and looking after the flock. We will begin in verse 1. This is the parable of the sheepfold. Let's understand that a sheepfold in those days was a rectangular pen to house sheep. The sheepfold was made of piled up stones around the perimeter. On top of the stones they put thorn bushes, kind of the ancient equivalent of razor wire, so that animals couldn't jump over and thieves couldn't get in. At one end was a gate, a door.

Christ says in verse 1:

**John 10:1.** *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. (KJV)*

Because they are not going through the door, They're trying to sneak in.

- 2) But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*
- 3) To him the porter [Greek means doorkeeper] opens; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.*
- 4) And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them ... (KJV)*

He doesn't beat them and whip them. He walks in front of them.

- 4b) ... and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.*
- 5) And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*
- 6) This parable Jesus spoke unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spoke unto them.*
- 7) Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. (KJV)*

Christ is not only the shepherd, He is also the door.

8) *All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.*

9) *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved ... (KJV)*

Through baptism and through repentance before that, through accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior.

9b) *... and shall go in and out, and find pasture. (KJV)*

What that phrase means, "he will find pasture" is that this individual will find good food to eat in the pasture. That individual will be fed.

10) *The thief ... (KJV)*

This primarily refers to Satan and those he provokes. The following we have talked about before.

10b) *... comes not, but for to steal... (KJV)*

Means to steal God's people away from the truth and away from Christ and the Father to Satan.

10 continued) *... and to kill ... (KJV)*

To physically kill God's people if he can. God won't allow that unless it serves a higher purpose, but Satan wants to kill each one of us.

Finally and most importantly:

10 continued) *... and to destroy ... (KJV)*

He wants to destroy us eternally, to destroy the spirit in man and the holy spirit in each of us. That is Satan's motivation.

10 continued) *... I am come [contrarily] that they might have life ... (KJV)*

This is just the opposite. Satan wants death for us. Christ says:

10 continued) *... and that they might have it more abundantly. (KJV)*

Like we are having here. This is abundance on top of abundance.

11) *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. (KJV)*

What a concept. He is willing to sacrifice Himself for the sheep. As Paul said, "I'm spent for the church and for the brethren."

*12) But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming ... (KJV)*

The hireling sees the wolf running at full speed at the sheep and, guess what? He leaves the sheep. He flees and then the wolf catches the sheep. We've seen that happen. We've seen shepherds leave the flock and then go do what they want to do and not take care of the brethren.

*12b) ... and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. (KJV)*

The hireling flees. Why? Because he is a hireling. He's just in it for the money.

*13) The hireling flees, because he is a hireling, and cares not for the sheep. (KJV)*

The true shepherd, Christ, cares for each one of us and a true assistant shepherd under Christ will care for each one of the brethren. There is no respecter of persons. He cares for each one deeply. Christ says:

*14) I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. (KJV)*

Christ said a shepherd's role is to care for the brethren, to insure that they have healthy food to eat, to insure they are not fed poison and to insure that they don't get food that has no nourishment. They insure the food they get has lots of nourishment so they don't just wither on the vine. It is a terrible responsibility. All of the speakers here today take that responsibility to heart and deeply understand that responsibility.

So all of us are here to be fed spiritually and I'm including myself. I'm here to be fed because I learn from you. I learn from your examples. I learn from your care of other people, your self-sacrifice. I learn from you on how you handle adversity. I learn from your example. We can all learn from each other. We can all be fed by each other.

So the fifth point is that we are here to be fed.

### **Reason No. 6. We are here to give and to serve.**

The fifth reason, to be fed, is incoming. We're sitting here being fed from some being outside of us or God feeding us.

The sixth reason, to give and serve, that is outgoing. That is coming from us and going out to others. By giving and serving here at the feast we get to practice the world tomorrow, because if we make it into the world tomorrow, our prime job is going to be

giving and serving, helping and caring and teaching and training, not strutting around in jack boots and a whip, not barking orders, but helping and serving people. We have an opportunity to give and serve in a space away from the world while we live in these temporary dwellings. Each one of us should make our goal this feast to make somebody else's feast better. Not just one, but hopefully a whole bunch. Make somebody else's feast better.

I remember about thirty years ago, back in the Worldwide days and you get the feast brochure and you have an assigned site. A woman was in a real snit because she didn't like the assigned site. She said, "Well, what's in it for me?" What she meant was that the activities at this particular feast site didn't suit her, so there was nothing for her to do that she really wanted to do. If we have that attitude, that misses one of the great points of the feast, because we are here to give of ourselves, to serve others. That can happen anywhere at any feast site. We get to practice the way of God, the two great commandments. We get to practice it every day here.

Let's go to Matthew 7:12. What a concept Christ introduced on the Sermon on the Mount. We can't emphasize the Sermon on the Mount enough, because that was the first recorded sermon of Christ and He is setting a new tone. He is amplifying the law spiritually and not just the dos and don'ts the Pharisees had piled on the peoples' shoulders.

***Matthew 7:12.*** *Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. (KJV)*

This is it. This sums it all up. If you want people to love you, you love them. If you want people to have consideration for you, you love them. If you want people to pay attention to you, pay attention to them. Whatever we want, do onto others.

We find out that we are truly happy when we are making other people happy. A group of us were sitting around last night and there were about three or four kids. They were so happy. I was looking at Greg's eyes as he was watching the kids. They were doing what kids do and they were smiling and happy. Greg starting smiling and grinning. The happier they were, the happier Greg got. That is true, because when we make other people happy and when we see other people happy, we get happy.

My first few feasts in the 1960s were in Mount Pocono. It started off in a tent and then went to a big building. After the second feast they put me in the glorious job of being in charge of the latrines. We went in there and cleaned up all the toilet paper and put soap in and all that kind of stuff. I noticed a young man in his twenties and he brought in an older man in a wheelchair. This man was severely handicapped. The young man would bring him in and put him in front of a stall, get the wheelchair as close as possible and literally lift the man out of the wheelchair and muscle him into the stall. You know how difficult that would be. He would prop him up, get his trousers down and then set him on the toilet. He would go out and close the door and patiently wait. I watched this for several feasts. When the man finished, he would go in and clean him up and dress

him and muscle him out into the wheelchair and go back to the big building. I saw this young man and this old gentleman in restaurants. I saw them in the parks and in the woods around Pocono. This young man gave up his feast for I don't know how many years. Most young guys are out looking for girls, but he gave up his feast to take care of this man. He did it with a smile and he was truly happy because he was providing a feast for a man who had no feast unless someone helped him.

With that in mind, let's turn to Philippians 2:3. This man was an example. We say we learn from each other. I learned from this guy. This was an example of Philippians 2:3.

***Philippians 2:3.*** *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit ... (NIV)*

How many times have things been done in the church through selfish ambition or conceit? We're told not to let anything be done that way.

***3b) ... Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, (NIV)***

This young man esteemed that old man much better than himself.

So here in Kellogg, let's make a commitment to seek out someone who is alone, someone sitting alone. Seek them out. Talk to the teens. We don't have many teens here, but there are a few. Talk to them and talk to the kids. Get to know the kids and get to know what's on their mind. Help the feeble. As all of us get older, we get more and more feeble. So there are more opportunities to help the feeble. Help to unburden those who are burdened. Meet someone new every day. Make sure you meet someone new every day and remember their name and the next day greet them again. Spend some time with them and get to know them.

You see, we give and serve each other by things that are so simple ... a kind word, a good deed, a Christ-like example. People have in mind that they have to do something majestic or mighty to serve. Something mighty can be a word at just the right time, an example just when it's needed, a good deed when people feel hopeless or down. When we do that, guess what happens? God notices.

Let's go to Luke 6:38. I will read it from the NLT. The NLT doesn't change the meaning on this verse, it just puts it in language that is more modern. Here is a principle. God notices what we do and then He acts based on what we do.

***Luke 6:38.*** *Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more ... (NLT)*

I was putting coffee beans in a jar the other day and all the beans in the sack wouldn't fit in the jar, so you shake and bang it and finally it gets down so you can add that last little bit. What God is saying is, "You give and I'm going to give it back to you and it will be shaken down and packed in and it will be more coming back to you than you gave."

38b) ... running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.” (NLT)

God notices. Bringing joy to others brings joy back to us in greater measure.

So in the sixth point, our roles here at the feast are to give and serve one another by the fruits of the holy spirit.

**Reason No. 7. This applies not only here, but going forward. We are here because we need each other’s help in holding fast.**

Who could imagine a year ago all the things that are happening now in the world? Christians are being killed, crucified, persecuted, people are being beheaded on television. The whole topography of the Middle East politically is being changed. Ebola is just about ready to explode despite what the government says. All kinds of things are going on.

We are going to need each other’s help to hold fast. Let’s turn to Hebrews 10:23-27. Here is an admonishment that applies to us today.

**Hebrews 10:23.** *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*

24) *And let us consider one another to provoke [the New King James says to stir up] unto love and to good works: (KJV)*

He said, “Let us esteem each other better than ourselves to stir up love and good works among each other.”

25) *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching. (KJV)*

We are seeing that day approaching far more than Paul saw the day approaching when he wrote these words. The Greek word for “exhort” is Strong’s 3870 and it’s *parakaleo* and it means to *call near*. When you want to get to know somebody, you call them near to you so you can have communication and get to know them. So he says to exhort one another. That means call near one another by assembling together. It can also mean to *be of good comfort*. Put yourself in a position of being able to comfort your brothers and sisters. It also means to pray for one another. So when it says exhort one another so much more as you see the day approaching, get close, be of good comfort and pray for one another.

Then notice what follows, talking about exhorting and assembling ourselves together. For a few years I scratched my head as to why this followed.



26) *For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins,*  
27) *But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. (KJV)*

It's interesting that the admonition, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, is immediately followed by the reference to the unpardonable sin. God wouldn't do that if there isn't a connection between the two. He could have put it somewhere else about the unpardonable sin, but it follows right after this admonition to exhort one another and assemble together. The only implication I see is that assembling together, to exhort one another is a primary way to avoid committing the unpardonable sin. By assembling together and comforting each other and praying for each other and calling each other near, it will keep us on the right track so we don't commit the unpardonable sin. It is a way we can help each other stand fast. It's a way we can help each other avoid going down a slippery slope, as so many have, into oblivion.

Let's go to Proverbs 27:17. This is a familiar scripture. This is what happens when we come together. When you're alone, you don't have another person to bounce ideas or thoughts off of. As the man said, "Don't believe every thought that comes into your head." That is true. We have some whacko thoughts some times. I think we know where those whacko thoughts come from.

***Proverbs 27:17.*** *Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance [the Hebrew word can mean "the state"] of his friend. (KJV)*

Brethren who isolate themselves can get very unbalanced. We have seen that. A couple of years ago, Harold Lee and I were talking over the phone about a handful of people that left. They had gotten very weird. Harold came out with what I call his "Haroldisms" that I remember. I dearly miss those. I was describing what was going on and he said, "Yup, you mark my words. It won't be long and they'll be barking at the moon." That's exactly what happened! My point is that we need each other's help to stay on the narrow path. We do so by exhorting each other, coming together and praying for each other.

Look at 2 Timothy 1:13. Paul is telling Timothy, "I want you to pay attention and be aware of this." Notice what Paul says to this young minister.

***2 Timothy 1:13.*** *Hold fast the form [New King James says the "pattern"] of sound words ... (KJV)*

What the Greek means by "sound words" is *true doctrine*. That's one of the meanings. So he is saying to hold fast the pattern of true doctrine ...

***13b) ... which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. (KJV)***

He said we must hold fast and we can help each other doing that. There are those Satan uses to get us off track. We call them clouds without water, tares, wolves in sheep's clothing or whatever the reference might be.

Christ said this in His first sermon. Christ used these beautiful and simple analogies that paint such clear pictures for us that have His spirit to understand.

**Matthew 7:13.** *Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. (NKJV)*

But Christ wants us to go through the narrow gate.

*14) ... Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life... (NKJV)*

Christ did not promise us a rose garden. Christ did not promise to grease the skids so we just jump on the slide and go merrily into the Kingdom of God. That's not the promise. That's not what's going to happen. He said that difficult is the way that leads to life.

*14b) ... and there are few who find it. (NKJV)*

Or it can be translated, "*few who are finding it*" because not everyone is called.

Notice what comes next after He mentions this difficult way.

*15) Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

*16) You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

*17) Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit.*

*18) A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

*19) Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (KJV)*

That is the fate of those who would pervert God's way.

*20) Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them. (KJV)*

This is mentioned twice. Feed the sheep and feed the lambs is mentioned three times.

*21) Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ... (KJV)*

The point is, not everyone is going to make it.

*21b) ... but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

*22) Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied ... (KJV)*

The Greek word for “prophesied” can mean two things: *foretelling the future or speaking by inspiration* and both apply. Haven’t we gone into Revelation and Matthew 24 and prophesied into the future and haven’t we spoken by inspiration in your name?

*22b) ... in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? (KJV)*

What is Christ’s answer?

*23) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me [get out of My presence], you that work iniquity. (KJV)*

Working iniquity is what we do, what we wind up doing.

So, we need each other’s help to hold fast and stand against and avoid false prophets and false teachers which, prophecy tells us, will get worse and worse to the point that the elect could be deceived except for the very elect. So we need each other’s help in standing fast.

So we are here at the feast to help each other hold on, not by scolding or looking down on people, but by setting an admirable example, by encouraging, by praying, by exhorting. Let’s make sure we do that and set the tone of holding each other up, and encouraging each other.

Let’s conclude. We’ve seen seven reasons why we are here.

- We are here because we are commanded to, but we have to pay attention to the motivation behind why we are here. Yes, we are obeying, but is it because of love or because of fear? It should be because of love.
- We are here to come out of the world. God has blessed us with this beautiful place and beautiful weather in a beautiful part of the world.
- We are here to make the church a refuge. It has not always been, but we can change that and we can make it so here.
- We’re here because likeminded brethren come together. It’s good to see likeminded brethren coming together.
- We’re here to be fed – incoming.

- We're here to give and serve – outgoing.
- We need each other's help in holding fast.

You see, we are here at the feast to show God how much we love Him, by thinking and acting like His Son, by imitating the Father and the Son.

So let's commit to make these eight days a delight.

Let's go to one final scripture in Isaiah 58 and we'll read verses 13 and 14. Let's commit to what Christ, the God of the Old Testament, inspired Isaiah to write for our benefit today. Here it's talking about the Sabbath and the holy days.

***Isaiah 58:13.*** *If you turn away your foot from the sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day... (KJV)*

It applies to this day also.

*13b) ... and call the sabbath [holy day] a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shall honor him ... (KJV)*

Notice this.

*13 continued) ... not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: (KJV)*

If we do what God wants us to do, motivated by His love, motivated by an understanding of why we are here:

*14) Then shall you delight yourself in the Eternal ... (KJV)*

If we delight ourselves in the Eternal, what is the promise?

*14b) ... and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it. (KJV)*

So let's do our part in making these eight days a delight, not only for us individually, but a delight for each other. Think about this. Let's make these holy days a delight for God and Christ as they look down upon us as our Father and our elder Brother and our Savior.