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Hebrews 10 shares with us the promise of a new covenant has been fulfilled in Jesus. This promise was introduced way back in Jeremiah 31 when the Israelites were rejoining as a new people and here in Hebrews it has been made so.

This letter in Hebrews 10, for me, is a treasure text of what it means to be in an active relationship with God and each other.

To embrace this new covenant, perhaps we have to hear its origin, what it calls us into, and its ultimate hope for us collectively.

As Christ echoed *"it is finished"* on the cross, the inner most curtain of the holy of holies tore down the middle.

The curtain came down.

Before this moment, the temple was separated. Jesus spent his entire ministry proclaiming against a religion that separated the people from God or each other. We need each other, we were made for each and so the great divider of wealth, privilege, language, education, and othering came down. God's imminence & God's approachableness was known.

The curtain came down and with it our assurance of faith - our belief that Jesus died for us, rose again to restore us and will come again to be with us.

The curtain came down.

With the veil torn, Christ call us into the sanctuary with our hearts, our minds, and our bodies present. Our full personhood, as friends in Christ.

I don't know about you but in this particular season of my own exhaustion and stress, someday if I manage to bring 50% of my person to the table that is a feat.

Embodiment – holding our heart, mind and body as one - is a forever practice and a take back practice at that. The world around us doesn't really promote such an Intune person, but thank God we love a God who knows we have puzzle pieces to put back together and doesn't leave us alone to do it.

So, please hear me say that you're not failing Jesus for only showing up 50% this morning. 50% might be what you can give this entire year and you know what that is good enough to God.

Why?

*Because you are showing up!*

When scripture says "Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering..." what if this could mean for us – this is the place, the space, the community Jesus has made possible so let us confess our hopes, our fears, our forgiveness and not waver in that practice. Let us hold fast to the confession of relational hope without wavering.

A hope of being human with each other and God.

Jesus is calling us in to do one thing: *show up!*

Show up and share, show up and be honest, show up and hope – but most importantly show up and *provoke one another to love.*

This is the covenant we share with each other and God.

To believe, to show up and to love one another and God without wavering.

As simple as this is stated, I know all too well, it is terribly hard.

However, I believe, that in community friends, it is possible to provoke one another to love.

The curtain came down, we've been invited into the sanctuary, the ask and invitation to come as our full selves – to form a practice of hope with each other and what holds this covenant together – this new covenant – in relationship with God and each other is to provoke one another in love.

Now I'm sure young or old in this sanctuary, joining us online, you've heard love your neighbor as you love yourself – you've heard that we should love one another, care for one another – that we should do these things but I'm wondering if we know how?

Jesus did this unimaginable thing for us so that we could provoke one another to love. And Jesus give us a really good model of what that looks like.

When I looked for the definition of provoke all the definitions, I could find were negative ... to annoy, to aggravate, to make someone angry, to disrupt.

And, I don't know about you, but those aren't the words I would equate to love...I would equate words like happy, soft, cuddly, joyful. But no, the definition for provoke is to annoy to make angry to aggravate to disrupt...

Then a light bulb went off for me... this is all Jesus did. Jesus got angry. Jesus got disruptful. And, I bet Jesus annoyed the priests of the high temple. I just mentioned earlier that Jesus spent his entire ministry sharing how utterly backwards for us to be separated from God and each other. And yet Jesus didn't do that in a forceful way. Jesus didn't do that in a violent way. Jesus didn't do that in an unjust. Jesus did that by provoking us to love.

This letter in Hebrews 10 starts by calling us friends because we are – despite our differences – we are friends. We are kin to each other. And in this kindship, we are asked to do one thing: to show up & love.

This is the new covenant that we are constantly being reminded of in anything that we read in the text. That we are constantly being reminded of when Christ opens the doors to this very sanctuary that you walked into this morning.

This new covenant, this new joy, this new hope, this new love is the promise and action of us being in relationship with God and each other. And, it's

messy – but God is faithful. So, can we be faithful to each other? I believe we can. This is our covenant, Faith. A covenant of love.

As we enter our sanctuaries, may we hold the assurance of our faith through Jesus, walk through the curtain toward one another and provoke love by being bold enough to show up as we are - which is always good to enough to God who loves us so.

When we choose to walk through the curtain together, we are choosing to make heaven on earth possible as we await the day together in love & worship.

May we remember the curtain came down. Christ is leading the way. Our hope is relational, and our love is a faithful practice of showing up with what we can and naming when we need each other.

May we provoke love, always.