Hi,

Another week of the lockdown is behind us. Spring rains are on their way. Life just keeps rolling forward.

* **My Monday class next week, May 18, will not meet**, as Patti and I will be at MD Anderson for a consultation on my prostate cancer. **We may have to stay until Tuesday**, so the Genesis class may not meet either. So . . . **I’ll post updates as I have them on my personal Facebook page, where my on-line classes are meeting.**
* Since I’ll be away, I’ll miss a few Hope in Christ emails early next week.
* Please take a few minutes and complete [our survey of the congregation](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/56LPWQ8). It will help our church leaders to make better decisions in the weeks ahead.
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://www.scottengle.org/). All the postings are up-to-date.
* Keep sending in those movie and book recommendations.
* The Weekly Bible Study for this weekend is attached.

Here is Lauren Sandstedt’s message for this week. Lauren is one of our Perkins Seminary interns for the summer.

***“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the day approaching.” Hebrews 10:23-25***

Many committed athletes who train in competitive sports probably recognize the term “two-a-days” (i.e. practices in both morning and evening, in one day). Can you imagine this in the July, Texas heat? When I was only 12 years old, I began playing select soccer for highly competitive clubs and traveling the country for tournaments, until I went to college. I loved everything about it. But each year, in preparation for signing day on July 1, I lived in a constant cycle of “two-a-day” practices. Interestingly, if I ever had to skip a day of practice, I genuinely missed that time on the field with my team. There’s something uniquely bonding about strengthening, persevering and even struggling with others, in order to succeed.

The letter of Hebrews emphasizes a similar perseverance in faithfulness to God. The anonymous author’s street cred comes from including many references to Old Testament scriptures, as they pour over the letter’s pages. There is an emphasis on strengthening faith through honoring God’s holiness, laced throughout the letter. But 10:23-25, is my favorite part. If I were to summarize this passage in modern times, the 2020 bumper stickers might read, “Keep on keeping on!” or “Can’t stop, won’t stop!”. Both, rightfully so. The call to action is that despite inconvenience, persecution or idleness, the audience should *not to give up meeting together* but instead continue to *encourage each other*. This is their “to-do list”: be in community, be present, remember the truth of the gospel, and *do something about it!* I can just imagine the author ending the letter candidly saying, “well . . . don’t just sit there!”. And as a realistic person myself, I can’t help but think: haven’t we all been there at some point? We know we need to do X, but for some reason, we just can't seem to *keep on keeping on*.

Today, with Covid-19, it feels especially limiting in the ways that we can physically put v.25 into action. Unfortunately, during this time of the virus, most of us have already experienced that we are not immune from the struggles of life. Paradoxically, the beautiful hope is that our struggling is somewhat collective. Each certainly varies in shape or form, but our struggles are indeed shared in Christ’s own human suffering on that wooden cross. As Christians we have a share in Christ’s suffering – just as he does in ours. This is what we proclaim and remember during the sacrament of communion. This is what makes grace, costly. A grace that was not cheap, but rather cost God everything (his own Son), in order for us to gain everything (eternity with God). Learning this in school was wonderfully mind-blowing to me, and provided a refreshing hope in God’s powerful love and grace.

For 10 years, I was trained to play the center-midfielder position in soccer. As center-mid I served as a sort of nucleus for the team, in charge of strategically moving the ball all over the field trying to advance it toward the goal. However, it’s very difficult to play that position if you don’t practice *together as a team*. If our team wasn’t in sync, we would end up tired and worn out, too early in the game. Like in the letter to the Hebrews, our team *needed* those “two-a-day” practices to spur one another on towards our collective goal. Great motivation comes from such encounters, words, and bonding experiences. As we go out into the world (digitally for now) how will we remind each other to *keep on keeping on*? Where can we find the share in Christs’ sacrifice to be equally hopeful for us, in our daily lives in 2020? Together, in Christ, let us “*unswervingly hold onto hope*”.

*Movie recommendation*

Not too long ago, Patti and I re-watched *To Kill a Mockingbird*, starring Gregory Peck. What a wonderful film. It is not as special as the book, but it is deservedly a classic. It is #25 on the AFI top 100.

*Book recommendation*

Hal Kurkowski sent in a couple of recommendations. Here is one:

Another good book that I read recently when I saw it on a Bill Gates Top Ten List (Gates is an extremely avid reader) is called *Presidents of War*. It talks about the politics, decision making, and general history around each American president who was in office during a war (1812, Spanish American, Civil, WWI, WWII, Korean, Vietnam, Desert Storm, etc.). Very interesting to see how little is changed in the world of politics. In some ways, it was even less civil and more “rough and tumble” with some of the threats, accusations, even lies told by various administrations over the past 200+ years (hard to imagine, but true). Kind of sad, in a way, that we have learned very little or not progressed very far in our ability to interact with each other with respect to politics.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott