

Hebrews

June 18, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's service focuses on the book of Hebrews. Thank you to Paul, Dave, Glynnis, and Don for being part of the video. The scripture reading is Hebrews 3:12 to 18. Happy birthday this week to Shirley and Sellina and happy anniversary to Gloria and Jon R and Glynnis and John F.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Good morning. Glad to see everyone here and I don't see you online but I'm glad you're there. Let's start with some announcements. I want to get a birthday shout out to Connie and Daniel this week. We want to keep Daniel and family in prayer and my note here says that there was some improvement with recent scans so keep them and their family in our prayers. Mike's friend Roy had surgery this last week. Keep Mike, Roy, and family and friends in prayers. Doctors seem to think that it went well so that's good news hopefully. Let's go to God in prayer as we worship this morning.

Dear Lord, thank you for all you've given us and all you've blessed us with. Thank you for this day. Lord, we are blessed to have life. We're blessed to have each moment. We're blessed to have each breath but more than that we're blessed to be children of yours to not only have life but have life abundantly. Lord, help us to be in your presence today. Help us to worship you like we're in your presence. Help us to consider your word. Consider the message and help us to be open to changing our lives to be more in line with you and your will. Be with us as we continue to live this life in Jesus name, Amen.

Communion

You are familiar with clouds. Not today. There aren't any clouds out there right now but there are clouds usually in the sky. Just clusters of moisture deposits constantly changing shapes, sizes and moving in directions. There's cumulus, stratus, nimbus and a number of other names given to these clouds. There's another cloud, a cloud computing system. One where you have on-demand availability of computer system resources and data storage and power without your direct active management. There's other clouds. There's one mentioned, you're wondering what does this have to do with the Lord's Supper?

Hebrews chapter 12 and the sermon is going to be about Hebrews. So I selected a couple of verses. Therefore, chapter 12 begins, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before him endured the cross." The witnesses referred to here are those listed faith heroes in the preceding chapter, chapter 11. Looking up some ideas on this, Marvin Vincent—who I had not heard of—in a book, volume four of his word studies, suggests this. And by witnesses, it does not mean just spectators, but those who have borne witness to the truth. Yet the idea of spectators may be implied and is really the principal idea. The Hebrew writer's picture is that of an arena in which Christians are contending in a race or a competition. While the vast host of these heroes of faith who, having borne witness to the truth, have entered into their heavenly rest, they watch the contest from

the encircling tiers of the arena, compassing and overhanging like a cloud filled with lively interest and sympathy and lending heavenly aid or encouragement.

Can you imagine doing what we are about to do in the center of the Rogers Center with this cloud of witnesses surrounding and watching us? Perhaps you have your own personal heroes of faith. You have friends, you have family, perhaps teachers, preachers, missionaries, people you know of faith who are a part of this cloud of witnesses watching over you now. Those who have passed on, as we take these emblems, let them encourage your faithfulness. Be encouraged by those who have gone before.

Hebrews 10, starting at verse 19, and I might skip a little bit, but, "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened up for us through the curtain that is his body, and since we have a great high priest, Jesus, over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and in full assurance of faith." He adds this other little line in a couple of verses that I think is encouraging also. Let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we are so thankful for those who have preceded us in faith for their example and their courage and for their encouragement to us now. We thank you for Jesus, for his body, his blood. Bless these emblems as we take them, and may we be strengthened, encouraged, and draw closer to you and one another. In Christ we pray. Amen.

Reading

They are just so cute, I don't know how they, honestly, and like Adam blows my mind that he can [gestures around], and his mouth goes at the same time and the right stuff comes out. It's awesome. Mostly, okay. And Paul, yes. And Paul, sorry Paul. Now I got it, you know, it's funny he would say that Paul. I have struggled my whole life to remember them all, and I might be getting close to it. Oddly enough, certainly in light of our scripture, the one I always forget is, oops, faithfulness.

So the scriptures say to us in Hebrews 3, 12 to 18, "See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God, but encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." We have come to share in Christ if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. As it has just been said, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion. Who were they that heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for 40 years? Was it not those who sinned whose bodies perished in the wilderness? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest, if not to those who disobeyed?

Sermon

Good morning, everyone. We welcome you this morning. Glad that you are with us. [pause] Believe it or not, the city of Los Angeles is known as the city of angels. And being attending Pepperdine for many, many years, I've always wanted to get to this particular church, but never could get there because of busy time. But it's unique that this city of angels church has surrounding in a courtyard 135 statues of saints and all of their names are listed. But what's truly unique is that all of the saints surrounding in circle are focused on one person. And guess who that is? Focused on Jesus. From Old Testament to New Testament, the focus is on Jesus. Two thousand years later, here we are. And our focus is on, help

me, Jesus. Hasn't changed. Time will not change it. The focus of our life is Jesus. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And we know all of this.

But the book of Hebrews is written by someone we don't know. For many, many years they thought it was the Apostle Paul, and that was dispensed of. Some people think it was a woman who wrote this book, and it very well could have been. We don't know. But the focus, of course, is on Jesus, not angels. And so today what I'd like to do is just go through what I think are pretty important scriptures in this wonderful book that even though it was written two thousand years ago, there's value for it today. And to be reminded in chapter one, in verse one, that in the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways. And when you go through the Old Testament, there's a unique ways in which God presented what he wanted the prophets to say. But in these last days, and we're part of these last days, he has spoken to us by his, somebody help me, Son, Jesus Christ, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he also made the universe. The Son, Jesus Christ, is the radiance of God's glory. No one has seen God's face. But when we look at Jesus, we're looking at God. The Son is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of God's being, sustaining all things by his powerful Word.

After saying all that and reading all that, it's important to read the scripture. It's important to know what Jesus is saying to us even today. It begins by saying to even saints 2000 years ago who got somewhat warped in their faith, they thought they could worship angels. Comes along and says, no, angels are servants are not angels ministering spirits sent by God to serve those who will inherit salvation. Angels have not ceased to exist. Angels are here helping us, encouraging us. So it talks about this, the Son is superior to all the angels. For to which of the angels did God ever say, you are my son. And today I become your father. No, no, that's not going to happen. And it's speaking in verse seven. And speaking of angels, he says, he makes his angels spirits and his servants flames of fire, which is an interesting saying that God has really charged angels to do a variety of things, but it was always to honor God, honor people who needed it. And so today I just want to look at a couple of these scriptures that I think are very relevant for us even today. And there's a bit of a warning, even though chapter one is beautiful. It's wonderful. Promises are fantastic. But be careful.

In chapter two, he says this, we must pay most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard so that we won't drift away. Don't allow our faith to sink down. Always encouraged to not drift away. For since the message spoken through angels, they weren't prophets, but they helped to write the prophet they have to tell them, here's what God says, here's what Isaiah says, here's what Malachi says all the way through it. So he says, it's, it's powerful. In the beginning, you laid the foundations of the earth. So he says, it's not angels that he has subjected the world to come for which we are speaking. What are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them. And then he says in verse 14. Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity, so that by his death, meaning Jesus, he might break the power of him who holds the power of death. That is the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. In other words, he's saying there were people who just couldn't grasp faith. But now they're getting it. Because himself he suffered when he was tempted, and he's able to help us when we are tempted. And I think that's a good quality for all of us to remember. If we're tempted to do something and you're thinking, you know, I'm not, I'm not so sure that that's the right thing to say. And I'm not so sure that's the right thing to do. Then listen to that. Is it God speaking to us? Is this going to bless anyone? Is this going to help anyone? If I'm in a bad mood, am I going to share that with everybody? We want to be blessings of God.

And so angels somehow took over people's thinking. And so the Hebrew writer, whoever it is, says, no, no, no, the focus is on Jesus. And then he says something unique in chapter four. He says, on the seventh day, God rested from all of his work. And again, in the passage above, he says, they shall never enter my rest because of their unfaithfulness. Therefore, since it still remains for some to enter the rest, and since those who formerly had good news proclaimed to them, they did not go in because they lost their faith because of their disobedience. And so he said, today, if you hear his voice, that's true for us today. The Bible says today, for today, if you hear his voice, what's he saying? Verse 12, for the word of God, it's alive. The word of God isn't just words. The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates, listen to this, even to dividing the soul and the spirit. And I don't know how you divide a soul and a spirit, but he does. Joints and marrow, it judges the very thoughts and attitudes of our heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

And so the focus of the outside courtyard of the City of Angels Church, some 135 saints, but we're not looking at them. We might look at those saints and say, they're all looking at the same thing. They are. They're looking at Jesus. It's a reminder that as you come into that church, don't focus on the statues, focus on the one that's there. And of course, that's Jesus. So he encourages us to grow in your faith. And then he says, but to really grow in your faith. He says, it's hard to make clear to you because you no longer try to understand. They're not really paying attention anymore. In fact, by this time, you ought to be teachers. You need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God, God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food. Anyone who lives on milk, still being an infant is not acquainted with the teachings about righteousness, but solid food, solid scripture is for the mature who by constant use, by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil because you know it. Therefore, let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and acts that lead to death and faith of God and instruction about cleansing rights and so forth, the resurrection of dead, eternal judgment, and God permitting, we will grow and go beyond that.

And so in chapter six, he reminds us of various priests. Some of you remember some of the priests in the old testament. There was this wonderful priest by the name of Melchizedek, and no one knew anything about Melchizedek. He was called the king of peace. But what's interesting about Melchizedek is he is, listen, he is without father and he is without mother. He is without the beginning of days and he is without the end of days, resembling the son of God. He, Melchizedek, remains a priest forever. No one knew where he came from. No one knows where he's gone except we know, but he remains an encourager for us. You see, angels who come along to help us, but as we are praying and offering our prayers to God, don't you just believe that all of the saints that are there are praying for us and some of our loved ones who are already there are waiting for us and praying for us. And one day it'll be our turn. One day it'll be our encouragement. So why wait until later? Why not just encourage each other every day? Just welcome people, as saints of God to come together as one. And this mysterious priest comes in and represents God himself and Jesus himself. And then in verse 22 of chapter seven, it says, Jesus has become a guarantor of a better covenant, grace. Now there have been many of those priests since death prevented them from continuing in office. But listen, but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore, he is able to save completely, completely those who come to God through him because he's always, always lives to intercede for us.

We don't see them, but the angels of God are interceding for us. The saints are praying for us. Jesus is rooting us on. God is our savior and father. The Holy Spirit is presenting all kinds of opportunities for us

back then and today and in the future. He is able to save us 90% of the time. No, not even 99.9. No, he's able to save us. Help me completely, completely. Look what God is doing for each one of us. It is incredible. And I always feel embarrassed if when I wake up in the morning, I think I didn't say thank you God last night before I went to bed. There's so many things to be thankful for, but I didn't say thank you. Sometimes we can forget. And so here is this book where he's telling us that priests are up to their neck in blood, sacrificing by blood sacrifices all over the place for the hope that their sins would be forgiven, but they couldn't be. Not until the sacrifice took place. And that, of course, is Jesus. Therefore, he's able to save us completely and he's always interceding for us. And then in chapter nine and verse 11, here's what he says, talking about the blood of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ. But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that are now already here, what we already experienced, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands. That is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by the means of blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption, the blood of goats and bulls and ashes of heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonial and clean sanctify them so that they are outwardly king. How much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciousness, cleanse our consciousness from acts that lead to death? Yes, we sin, but we want to serve the living God. And it has an exclamation point in my Bible so that we may serve the living God. Christ is the mediator of a new covenant that those who are called may receive a promised eternal inheritance.

My mind goes back to this church in Los Angeles, 135 saints, all focused around the altar. Christ himself. He's the focus. He's the focus. Even though they gave sacrifices, even though day after day priest stands and does his religious duties, the priests, oh, what a job that would have been. From morning till night, up to their knees in blood, sacrificing over and over and over again, doing it Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and never ever really getting the understanding of forgiveness of sins. But you know what they did? They showed us what they did for us. They may not have really understood all those sacrifices, but they were an example of the sacrifice of Christ himself for us. And may we pass this on to the next generation, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us. Priests were up to their necks in blood at the end of the day and never really having their sins forgiven because of Jesus who is now the sacrifice for all has given us this.

So, I'll start wrapping up in chapter 10 in verse 32. And I think this is important. He says, remember those earlier days when you had received the light, when you endured in great conflict of suffering, sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution. And other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You suffered along with those in prison and you joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property because you knew that you yourselves had a better and lasting possessions. So don't throw away your confidence. Do not throw away your spiritual confidence because it will be richly rewarded. When we see Jesus for the first time, all those things that bothered us are gone. Never to enter our mind again. Never. They're gone. The worry is gone. The anxiety is gone.

And so in chapter 12, there's this beautiful, beautiful understanding about listing all of these people. And then in chapter 12 in verse one, he says, therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily it tangles and let us run with perseverance. The race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith for the joy he set before him. He endured the cross, scorning a shame, sat down at the right hand of God, consider him who endured such opposition from sinners so that you will not grow weary and

lose your faith. Don't do it. And so Thomas Long writes these words. The congregation, whoever that is, in Hebrews, is exhausted. They're tired, tired of serving in the world, tired of worship, tired of Christian education, tired of being a peculiar and whispered about in society, tired of the spiritual struggle, tired of trying to keep their prayer life going, tired of even to know what to say to Jesus. Their hands droop, their knees are weak, attendance is down at church, and they're losing confidence. The threat to this congregation is not that they're charging off in the wrong direction. They don't have enough energy to charge anywhere. The threat here, the threat here is this, worn down and worn out, that they may drop the end of their rope and drift away. Tired of walking the walk, many of them are considering taking a walk, leaving the community and falling away from faith. That's why Hebrews was written. For exhausted people. And this wonderful writer, whoever he or she is, reminds us of all the saints, all the prophets, from Rahab to Japheth to Gideon to Barak to Samson, all the way through and said, don't give up. Don't give up. And so he concludes the book.

In chapter 12, and he puts us into it, he says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance for the race that's marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus." Just like those 135 saints facing, looking at the face of this statue, we don't believe in this statue. We believe in this Jesus. Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer, the perfecter of faith. "For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame." And then, listen, sitting down at the right hand of the throne of God. One day, we'll close our eyes for the last time, and then we'll open them, and we'll see the face of God, the face of Jesus, the face of the Holy Spirit, the faces of your loved ones. And we'll be part of the cheering team in heaven, encouraging our children and our grandchildren and our friends, don't give up. God will never, ever, ever, ever give up on us. And so, he says in conclusion, just keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Don't forget to show hospitality, for some people have entertained angels and didn't know that they were angels. And through Jesus, let's continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise. Amen.

Closing

Let's pray. Dear Lord, thank you for all you've given us and all you've blessed us with. Thank you for this day to be together. It's time to think of you and your word. Lord, help us to be a people who have worshipped, to live like we have worshipped, to live like we have heard you, and to glorify you in the rest of our day. In Jesus' name, amen.

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