

Hebrews

March 17, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is a study of the book of Hebrews. The scripture reading is Hebrews 1, 1-4. Thank you to Ed, Barbara, Jim, and Don for being part of the video.

Welcome, Announcements & Prayer

Good morning everybody!

[Good morning!]

So good to see everybody this morning. When I stand up here and you're all chattering away, I hate to really break up that visiting that's going on. Just feels like a group of people that like each other and I think that's a good thing. Jim's having a birthday this week and he told me this morning that he punched this clock at his work on Friday for the last time. Now he's starting a new adventure. Get up in the morning and wonder what he's going to do today. Anyhow, and Kate also has a birthday this week. I'd like to thank the folks that stayed last week for our annual meeting and if you would like to see a copy of the minutes speak to Adam.

I think there's some good news about Pam. She has got the go ahead to go to Shaver on Monday. We have been down this road with her a couple of times already and they got cancelled at the last minute, but we're really hoping that this is going to take place. If you are going to go to see her this week, if you could call Rhonda first, she'll know whether she actually made it there on Monday. She loves our church family and she feels like people have surrounded her and it's a good thing to help her in this difficult time. Alice's sister Mary passed away early this morning and Alice was able to be with her in hospital last night. We have to keep Alice in our prayers as well.

It's good to be together today. We hope that being together will help us to draw closer to God. And I think being together in the room and worshipping and seeing each other, worshipping is a profoundly good thing that we can see the faith that we have and we can express that faith to each other as we pray and as we sing and as we commune, as we listen to a sermon, as we listen to the scriptures that will help us when the church is not meeting in this building but is in the community being the church outside of the church. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we are so grateful that we can be together here in this place today to collectively honor you and to lift our voices up and praise, to contemplate the wonder of your being and your creative power and your intelligence and your spirituality and your personality and that somehow that these things, these qualities that you have are woven into us as well. And we pray Father that we might be people who demonstrate your personality that will be people of love and joy and peace and hope and generosity and goodness and faithfulness. We're thankful that we can be together. We pray for Alice today in the passing of her sister. We pray that she'll have comfort there that she's had so many years with her sister and the blessing of that and be reminded of the goodness of that relationship. We pray Father for people in our community that are sick. We pray for Pam. We pray for her health, for her spiritual vitality in a difficult situation.

We're thankful Father for, in some ways, for suffering because through this suffering we learn about your presence in our life and we learn about your goodness and faithfulness and it gives us hope that when we pass, that we pass in a good way that we join you in the heavenly hosts. We're thankful Father for our time together and we pray your blessing on it at this time. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Communion

Our family has a cottage on Lake Erie. Since 2022, Helen and I have spent our summers there and when we sit on the front deck, we have an unobstructed view of the lake. To say that the lake permeates life at the cottage is an understatement. It's our point of reference from sun up to sun down.

A few years ago, my life was suddenly turned upside down and the following summer I was alone at the cottage. I found that when I sat on that front deck and looked at the lake, I had a sense of peace. It took me quite a while, but I finally realized that when I was looking at the lake, I was somehow sensing God.

The first connection that I made was the lake's everlastingness. I Googled it and it says that Lake Erie has been there in some form or another for over ten thousand years. So if you can picture all the people that stood on the shore and watch those waves pound over the rocks, though our family does, it really is something. My lake has permanence.

It also has power. Even on days when the surface of that lake is like glass and it looks as if diamonds have been sprinkled across, anybody who knows anything about Lake Erie knows that there's tremendous power just below the surface. My lake and my God have power. The beauty and the environmental harmony are another connection that I made with the lake and God. Such perfection could never be a result of chance. Clearly some masterful and exacting hand was at work to create my lake.

So what does our little slice of Lake Erie have to do with communion? The reason that we have communion is to remember and to celebrate Christ's death, his burial, his resurrection, and then our salvation. It is the core of our Christian beliefs. It is so important that we do it every Sunday.

We bow our heads and we remember that the symbols that we take, the bread and the juice, are really representing Christ's body and his blood. You might think that something as important and straightforward as this would be easy to do, but not always so, at least not for me. I must admit that sometimes I bow my head and my thoughts bounce from one inappropriate thing to another, and that is where my lake comes in. If I can focus on my lake and therefore God's permanence, power, perfection, peace, and beauty, then usually my jumbled thoughts recede and I can concentrate on Christ's death burial resurrection. Now you all may not have a lake like we do, but God has put his stamp on every aspect of his creation, so there will be something that you can maybe use the way I use my lake.

It could be the millions of stars, not millions, that's not enough. Unbelievable number of stars you can see on a clear night. Donnie mentioned that last Sunday. It could be the tiny fingernails of a newborn. It could be the feeling that you get when loving arms are wrapped around you and giving you a hug when you need it most. That is my humble suggestion to you. A way to and a reason for

finding God in the awe-inspiring ordinary. A way of pushing aside life's hindrances and dwelling on the source of our salvation when perfection was sacrificed for the imperfect. Before we take the symbols, let's bow our heads.

Dear God, please show us a way of leaving life's hindrances so that we can use the wafer and the juice to concentrate on Christ's death, his burial, his resurrection and the promise of eternity spent with you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Hebrews 1:1-4

Morning. Our reading this morning is from Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 to 4. In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days he spoke to us by his son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he had made the universe. The son is the radiance of God's glory, an exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by powerful word. After he had provided purification for our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven so he became as much superior to the angels as the name he had inherited is superior to theirs. [music]

Sermon

Hebrews

Good morning everyone. Thank you very much for being with us today. Some people have been asking about this digit. I was attacked by a seven year old boy and he won.

The book of Hebrews is really an interesting book. It has a lot of excitement to it. It goes deep.

What's really interesting about Hebrews is nobody knows who wrote it. For many years, the apostle Paul's name was attached to it, but most scholars suggest that that's not the case. We're not sure. But whoever the author is, he knows very well of Old Testament laws and so forth, but he's bringing us to one particular point and that is we all gather together under Christ's head, that he is superior to all things. It's a calling to revive our faith in Jesus Christ.

Never to give up on that faith. Even though life can be very difficult, it's to hang in there as best we can. Many Christians in the first century were persecuted because of their faith and they would go through it again if they had to because the superiority of Jesus Christ is what's very, very important. The book of Hebrews is a calling for reviving that faith in all aspects of life. It's the supremacy of Jesus Christ. So whoever the writer is, in chapter one, in verse one, it says these words, really interesting that in the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets. We know the prophets, Malachi, Nahum, all of them, but in these last days, we don't need those prophets, but in these last days, he has spoken to us through his son, Jesus Christ, whom God appointed heir, listen to this, of all things and through whom he made the universe. The son, Jesus Christ, is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of God's being, listen, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification, death, burial and resurrection, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty of heaven and he will be coming back someday. It's a promise. Won't that be awesome? Have you ever thought of what it will be like? Here he comes. We have him in our heart, but one day he will be coming to us, seeing him face to face. He talks about powerful

people, but the majesty is not the angels. The majesty is Jesus Christ. You are my son, he says. Today I have become your father.

And again, verse six, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." Angels don't worship angels. Angels don't worship us. Angels worship Jesus, God the Father, God the Son and go the Holy Spirit. And if they do, we should too. Let's all God's angels worship him. And speaking of angels, he says, he makes the angels wins his servants flames of fire. What about the son, meaning Jesus Christ, he says, "Your throne, O God, will last forever and forever and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom." You have loved righteousness and you've hated wickedness. Look at our world today because of wickedness. Therefore, God, your God has set you above your companions. Listen, by anointing us with the oil of joy. That joy is more than just laughter. That joy is love, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness. It needs to exude from out of us because of who Jesus is. He says, "God has set you above all your companions anointing you with the oil of joy."

Paul writes in the book of Ephesians that one day, excuse me, God will bring all things together under one head, namely Jesus Christ, and that God is reconciling all things, listen, on heaven and earth and making peace through the shed blood of Jesus. Take God out of the picture and what exists? Nothing. Take Jesus out of the picture. What exists? Not us, nothing. Take the Holy Spirit out of the picture. Nothing exists. The Hebrew writer is saying, "Christ is preeminent and welcomes us into his kingdom." If you've never been part of that kingdom, we would encourage you to do so.

The writer often goes back into the Old Testament and quotes Old Testament scriptures like this scripture, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain. You will roll up like a robe, like a garment will be changed, but you remain the same." It's this constant thing. No matter what happens in life, God is not changing. And then he says these powerful words, "Are not angels ministering spirits to serve those who inherit salvation?" Angels minister to God and that ministry comes to us. I don't know if we see angels, but angels are always at work in our life. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, believing in all of us all of the time. And so he wants to say this in chapter two. Thank you very much, my faithful servant. He wants us to pay attention to how we live our lives. Angels are spirits, they're ministry, they help us, but they're not Jesus.

So it says it's not to angels that he has subjected the world to come by which we are speaking, but there is a place where someone says, "What is man that you are mindful of him? The Son of man that you care for him? You made humans a little lower than the angels. You crowned us with glory and honor and put everything under Christ's feet." And we're part of that. And so in putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. He was made, he was made lower than the angels in human form. But of course, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, they are God. And so the Hebrew writer, whoever he's writing to, is encouraging us with faith. Sometimes it's not easy to really grasp what he's saying because he's going back to the Old Testament over and over and over again, bringing them back. But he's preaching to Christians saying, "You know the Old Testament very well, but the Old Testament was leading up to Jesus Christ who comes to live in our hearts. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, never leaving us. You promise I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I am always with you."

We may forget that, but he doesn't. He's always with us. And so it talks about great, great prophets. He goes back to Moses and he talks about all the wonderful things that Moses endured in helping Israel to become faithful people again. And he says this, "As the Holy Spirit says, today in your hearing, hear his voice." Don't harden your hearts as they did in the Old Testament, as they did in the rebellion. Don't do that. See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. And it's so easy to do that. You know, financial troubles, marital difficulties, illnesses, all kinds of work situations. It's easy to somehow get lost in all of that. But when we do get lost in all of that, there is this whisper, because God says, "I'll never leave you and forsake you." There is that whisper of, "Come back to me. I've always been with you. I'm not leaving you. I will not leave you ever. Come back to me. Know me better. Talk to me. Share with me. Encourage one another daily. Today, hear my voice." So then in chapter 4 of the book of Hebrews, he says, "Therefore, since the promise of entertaining his rest stands tall to us, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen away. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did in that century, first century. We also have had the gospel preached to us, but for some, when they were preached to, they did not remember and they forgot, and it was of no interest to them."

So in Hebrews, it's this gun battle. Who's going to draw first? What's important? Is it always following the old law? No. Is it Jesus? Absolutely. His life, his sayings, his indwelling in us. The understanding of, as I've already said, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit actually does. They do live in us. He knew us before we were born. And so he talks about high priests making sacrifices after sacrifices after sacrifices, but none of those sacrifices forgave us of sins. It was only because of Jesus. And Jesus proves his superiority by serving us. His life is teaching, his agony on the cross, his resurrection, and his return for all of us. He promised he will come back.

And so in the Old Testament, it was sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice. And I feel sorry for some of those priests up to their knees in blood. Sacrificing, sacrificing, sacrificing. And that never forgave sins. But when the chief sacrifice came, Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven in him. Stay close to him.

It says, "The former of regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless," talking about the old law. "For the law made nothing perfect and a better hope is introduced." And that's the hope that we have today. So you go through the book of Hebrews and talks about various people, talks about the whole high priest who enters into the room. And by the way, it was only the high priest who could enter into that room to offer sacrifices. No one else was allowed, but not anymore. We're allowed to be the sacrifice. We're allowed to be priestly in Christ's eyes. And that through his eternal spirit, he sees us as unblemished before God. Isn't that remarkable? He sees us unblemished in the presence of God, all because of the covenant of Jesus. It's not with perishable things, such as silver or gold, that we have been redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to us by our forefathers, but by the precious blood of Jesus, a lamb without spot and without blemish. And that sacrifice is for all of us. And I suppose that in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11 is probably the most read out of all the Hebrew letter. And it's not easy. It's not easy. People gave up their lives for their children and grandchildren and generations to come. They gave up their lives.

In Hebrews 11, it says this, now faith is being sure of what we hope for. We don't just hope anymore. It's sure. It's being sure of what we've been hoping for. It's certain of what we do not see.

And that's what the ancients were commended for. They were wondering, when is this Messiah ever going to come? And eventually he comes. We talk about that at Christmas time. But the Hebrew writer says it's more than that. It's coming into God's kingdom, living even today.

So he talks about their longing for this heavenly experience that we will enjoy someday, but for many people it was difficult. The persecution of Christians in the first century was horrendous. It says this, what more can I say? I do not have time to tell you about Gideon or Barak or Samson or Jephthah or David or Samuel and the prophets who through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, escaped the edge of the sword whose weakness was turned to strength, who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again, and yet others were tortured and refused to be released so that they might gain a better resurrection. They knew where they were going. Some faced jeers, some faced flogging, while still others were chained, put in prison. They were stoned, they were sought unto. They were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated. Ah, the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts, in mountains, in caves, and even lived in holes in the ground. But they were all commended for their faith. None of them received what had been promised, but God had planned, listen, God had planned. If you heard anything that I've just said, what they've gone through, but listen to this, for us, God had planned something better for us. That's us. Only together with us would they be made perfect. They were horribly mistreated because of their faith, but they saw the generations that were coming. It's worth it. Is it worth it today to be faithful for the generations that will come? Absolutely. It's not just our own personal salvation. It is for the future of generations. Not always easy, but so, so important.

And he says it so much. Listen to these incredible words. He already sees us this way. You have come, but you have come to Mount Zion. You've come to the heavenly Jerusalem. You've come to the city of the living God. You have come, listen, to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. God knows you, knows your name, and it's already been written out. You'll get there when you get there, and you'll see your name to the church of the firstborn. Names written in heaven. Incredible.

So based on all of that, the Hebrew writer tries to finish up. He tries to finish up. He could have stopped earlier, but he just has to say a couple more things. But these words grab me. See to it, Donny, your name. See to it that you don't refuse Jesus who speaks to you. Don't refuse him. Because we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Let us be thankful to worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

And so as we finish up this letter in this book, he says to people who were sometimes wavering in their faith. He said through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise. You know in the Old Testament, they had all of these sacrifices, and these priests were up to their knees in blood, sacrificing and sacrificing and sacrificing, and they never did forgive any sins. But Jesus, because of his sacrifice, sheds his blood, has allowed us forgiveness of our sins. Isn't that incredible? Because he reminds us, never, never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you. So we need to say this with confidence. The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me? Well we'll throw you in prison. Well I'll do a devotion in prison. Well we'll take your life. Great.

I'm going to see Jesus face to face. What are you going to do? What are you going to do? We're going to do our best to live out the kingdom of God, to welcome people to come to Jesus Christ.

He says in conclusion, whoever it is that wrote this letter says, "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead Jesus our Lord Jesus, that the great shepherd of the sheep," listen, "equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, who may be glory forever and forever." I want you to know that God loves us so much that he wrote this book thousands of years ago for us. And as far as I'm concerned, it is one of the most relevant books, helpful books, even to this day. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, we are grateful for your grace and mercy. We're grateful for these folks in times past who were faithful to you, many in very, very difficult circumstances. May we learn from them to be faithful, and we may learn from them to be focused in our life, to be focused on you, be focused on your word, focus on your message, focus on your personality, focus on these important things that our life might be lived out in honor and glory to you because you certainly deserve that honor and glory. We pray your blessing now as we part, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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