

Cling to Jesus, Our Great High Priest Hebrews 4:14-16

Scripture:

Hebrews 4:14–16

[14] Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Introduction

Have you ever asked yourself the question, “**what are the things that I can’t live without?**” As I ask you that question in a church setting you are naturally going to give me the Christian answer. **I can’t live without Jesus.**

But I wonder what you might say in the ordinary everyday moments of your life?

- Do you say things like, I can’t live without my morning coffee?
- I can’t live without my family; they’re what keep me going.
- I would die if I couldn’t eat Mexican food, it’s my favorite.
- I couldn’t live without a certain amount of money, or a certain home, or job.
- I need my alone time. I can’t function unless I get some time to myself.
- **Mine might be, I couldn’t live without my bed, because it’s the only bed that allows me to get a good night sleep.**

We all say things like this. And we must admit that there is probably a small part of us that seriously means it.

Now over the past three weeks we have walked through some really important themes in the book of Hebrews.

- In the beginning of Hebrews 3:1-6 we learned that Jesus is greater than Moses. That Moses was faithful in God’s house as a servant, but Jesus is faithful over God’s house as a son.
- In Hebrews 3:7-15 we saw the rebellion of Israel in the desert and how a whole generation of Israelites were unable to enter the rest of the promise land because of their unbelief.
- Finally, in Hebrews 4:1-13 we were given the promise that there is still a rest to come that was greater than the physical promise land of Israel. **An eternal rest that comes through Christ and Christ alone.**

And in unpacking these themes the author of Hebrews gives us both a clear warning and a call.

As he writes in Hebrews 4:6b: **(Slide Change)**

*[6] And we are his house, if indeed we **hold fast** our confidence and our boasting in our hope.*

If we want to be a part of God's house than we must put our full confidence and hope in Christ alone.

Or in Hebrews 3:13-14 he says:

*[13] But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. [14] For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we **hold our original confidence firm to the end.***

The warning is to not be hardened by sin like the Israelites were. Instead, we can only share in the blessing of Christ if we fully put our confidence in him all the days of our lives.

And finally, in Hebrews 4:11:

*[11] Let us therefore **strive** to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.*

If we want to enter the eternal rest with Christ than we must strive to do so. This doesn't mean that we strive to earn that eternal rest through good works, but As Pastor Dan said last week, we fight to daily put our full hope, trust, and faith in him and him alone. **We must fight daily for faith.**

To become people who don't put our confidence in this world and its tangible blessings of stuff, but instead put our full confidence in who Christ is and the good works he has done on our behalf.

And it is this same idea that is being communicated in our passage for this morning when the author calls us to "**hold fast our confession.**" Now that term **hold fast** literally means "**cling to for dear life.**" **And the thing we are to cling to is our confession; meaning the truth and doctrine of Christ.**

In fact, this is a resounding theme of the book of Hebrews that we not only find in this section, but in later chapters as well. But instead of simply calling us to cling to Christ the author has been working hard to build an argument for us and for this church for why we must cling to Christ.

- He shows us in chapter 1 that we must cling to Jesus because he is the exact imprint of God's nature and that he is greater than angels.
- He shows us in chapter 2 the we must cling to Jesus because he came to earth to die for our sin so that he could become our perfect Savior.
- In chapter 3 we are told that we must cling to Jesus because he is greater than Moses.
- Finally, in chapter 4 he shows us that we must cling to Jesus because he is the only way to eternal life and rest.

But there is one more important reason that we must cling to Jesus. It is first introduced in Hebrews 2:17 and now will be carried forward all the way through Hebrews chapter 10. **And it is the theme that makes our ability to enter an eternal rest with God possible. It's the reality that we must cling to Jesus because he is our high priest.**

Now, as we begin to unpack just a few verses of this gigantic discourse this morning I want to give you three reasons why we must cling to Jesus as our High Priest.

- 1. Cling to Jesus, our great high priest because he sits at the right hand of God (V.14)**
- 2. Cling to Jesus, our great high priest because he has experienced our weaknesses (V.15)**
- 3. Cling to Jesus, our great high priest through whom we can draw near to the Father (V. 16)**

And it is my hope that we will each leave here with a greater confidence in Christ knowing that as our high priest he is the one and only one who could open a way for us to be with God, that he was fully human and yet was able to live the perfect life that we couldn't, and through him we now have the assurance and confidence to be able to draw near to our heavenly Father.

So, let's begin by looking at the first reason we can and should cling to Jesus as our high priest.

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- 1. Cling to Jesus, our great high priest because he sits at the right hand of God (V.14)**

Hebrews 4:14 says:

[14] Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Listen to this story from a 2008 Fox News article:

"The weekend is here, which means it's time to get your party on! But if you're planning on hitting some of these East Coast-West Coast playgrounds, you might want to have a back-up plan.

In Los Angeles, where the stars really do come out at night, the competition to get in the club-of-the-moment is brutal. Known as a home-away-from home for many celebrities, the West Hollywood vintage lounge Crown Bar runs a tough rope where only the most well-connected peeps can slip through.

This is a lesson "American Idol" big-wig Nigel Lythgoe recently learned the hard way (Remember, this was when American Idol was a big deal). Despite the fact that pal Ryan Seacrest booked him a pricey table to celebrate his birthday, Nigel was turned away at the front with every paper in town rolling on the story.

And this is just the beginning of a story which chronicles times when many Hollywood A-listers have been denied entrance into some of the most exclusive clubs in the world. This including people like Grammy award winner John Legend and even singer and cultural icon Britney Spears."

Now it seems weird doesn't it that famous A-listers can't get into these clubs? But the truth is that the only person who can ever get into an exclusive club all the time with no questions asked is the club owner themselves.

In the same way there was a small and very exclusive group of people in Israel who could go into the tabernacle or temple, and then into the holiest of holies where God's presence would manifest itself. **These people were the high priests who served in and throughout Israel's history.**

And one of their specific jobs was to go into the holiest of holies, in order to burn incense, and sprinkle the blood of sacrifices on the altar, or mercy seat. **They did this for their own sins and the sins of the people of Israel.**

But here's the problem. They not only had to make these sacrifices every year for themselves and for the people of Israel, but they could only come into God's dwelling place on one specific day of the year called **The Day of Atonement**. Every other day they were barred from getting in.

However, when we look to Jesus as our high priest, we realize that he did something far greater than just coming into the inner part of an earthly temple once a year.

As the author of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 9:11-12:

Hebrews 9:11–12

[11] But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) [12] he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

Jesus, as our perfect high priest, did something as the Son of God (**or God himself**) that no earthly priest could do. Through his death, burial, and resurrection he was able to fully and forever pass from earth into the real and heavenly dwelling place of God. As it says in our passage for this morning **"He passed through the heavens."**

And in so doing he not only sat down at the right hand of God in the place of power, but he has opened forever a way for us to be with God in his presence. And just as the high priests would intercede for the people of Israel we can live with the confidence and assurance that right now he is interceding or intervening on our behalf to the Father.

Look with me at God's Word.

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Romans Says 8:34:

[34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Then in Hebrews 10:19-20 it says:

[19] Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, [20] by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,

Brothers and sisters, this should give us hope and confidence today in a time where it can feel like there is no hope.

We can confidently live knowing that we serve a powerful God. That Jesus, as God, has opened the way for us to be with him in his kingdom. And through his perfect sacrifice, he has made us his people forever by securing for us the forgiveness of our sins. And right now, at this moment, he is in the Father's presence pleading our cause, intervening on our behalf, and working for our daily and eternal good.

He is our great high priest who now and forever sits at the right hand of God.

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2. Cling to Jesus, our great high priest because he has experienced our weaknesses (V.15)

[15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

When it was still warm out, Cyrus and I would go running together early in the morning. Now Cyrus of course is a great runner, and ran track in college, and well I'm not, and I didn't. But he decided that he wanted to help me get better by pushing me past my limits.

So one morning, as I went over to his house he informed me that he would help me by having us run hill sprints. Now, it should be plain to you what these are, but if you don't know, you literally run as fast as you can up a steep hill.

Now, I think he only made me do four of them, which may not seem like a lot, but trust me it is. And by the time I was running the 4th one I was basically run walking up the hill with the repeated phrase in my head, **"I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die."**

Now in this situation I did ultimately finish, but had he told me to run another one I probably wouldn't have been able to and it is safe to say that it was very hard for me to walk the next day.

And it is also pretty safe to say that no matter how hard I try and how hard I work, I may get better at running, but I will never be a track star. Because the truth is that I'm limited. I'm limited in my time, I'm limited in my physical make-up, and I am limited in the mental toughness necessary to push my body past those limits.

In the same way every single one of us is limited. As this verse says we have weaknesses. But the weaknesses referred to here are not physical limits or weaknesses, but rather spiritual limits and weaknesses.

And I don't know about you, but nothing has made that clearer to me than 2020. The pandemic, lockdowns, protests and violence have all conspired together to try and bring out the worst in us hasn't it.

People are more irritable and prone to anger. We are prone to despair as depression rates are skyrocketing. Rates of alcohol and drug abuse are at an all time high. And we can see people, even within the church, giving in to the temptation to want to quarrel and fight over politics, masks, is the virus real or not, racism, etc...

The truth is for many 2020 has been one of the greatest times of testing and trial that they have ever gone through. As a result, the tendency to give into sinful temptations and weaknesses are at an all-time high.

Yet, God in his mercy doesn't just leave us to deal with our temptations and weaknesses on our own. He doesn't just say, **“sorry bout' your luck, I hope you figure it out.”** No, in his love and compassion he was moved to act on our behalf. We see this compassion in Jesus' response to the crowds in Matthew 9:36 when it says:

[36] When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

God was so moved by our limits and our weaknesses that he sent us his own Son Jesus Christ to earth as a man so that he could live the life we never could.

As it says of Jesus in the 2nd half of Hebrews 4:15:

“...who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

We were so lost and dead in our sins and weaknesses and were unable to resist the temptations of this world. We truly were harassed and helpless. And what we needed was a perfect high priest who was both fully God and yet needed to be fully man so he could perfectly do what we couldn't which was live a life of perfect and total obedience to God the Father.

And in so doing we now have a high priest and Savior in the person and work of Jesus Christ who knows, understands, and sympathizes with the weaknesses we are experiencing right now. And we also have a high priest who in his life and death has overcome and defeated the weaknesses, temptations, and sins of this world.

And if we believe in him and cling to him we have the promise from the word of God that we too will overcome them, that we can and will have real victory over sin, and that by his grace we will endure the trials and temptations of this life until he returns.

As it says in 1 John 5:4-5:

[4] For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. [5] Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

So this morning let's be people who cling to Jesus our great high priest, the one who has fully experienced our weaknesses and yet has overcome them for us.

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3. Cling to Jesus, our great high priest through whom we can draw near to the Father (V. 16)

Hebrews 4:16:

[16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

We now come to the ultimate good news that the author of Hebrews has been building to in these closing verses of chapter 4. And each truth that he has unpacked is like a building block that creates the foundation for the final call of this chapter. And the bricks are built like this:

1. If we go back to Hebrews 2:17 we see that Jesus became like us so that he could become our faithful and great high priest.
2. And that same verse also makes it clear that he did it by shedding his blood for the sins of his people (or as it says, he made propitiation for our sins).
3. As our great high priest, Jesus, the Son of God (**God himself**), past through the heavens to the heavenly dwelling place of God. In so doing he opened the way for us to be with God forever. That's Hebrews 4:14.
4. As our great high priest, Jesus in becoming human, experienced and overcame all human temptations and weaknesses on our behalf. In this way he can not only sympathize and identify with the temptations we experience, but as our sinless Savior he is able to help us overcome them and endure them on a daily basis.

It is this great high priest Jesus Christ whom the author calls us to continually put our full hope and trust in. And if we do, we not only have the assurance of the eternal rest that he was talking about earlier in this chapter.

But verse 16 tells us that in our times of neediness, in our times of weakness, and in our times of temptation that we can, with full confidence, come into the presence of God. Which means we can come to God in prayer.

And when we draw near to him with faith we will not receive the retribution of an angry God, but instead we will receive the grace and mercy of a loving Father who wants to help us in our times of deepest need.

We all need this kind of grace and mercy right now don't we?

Conclusion

Now, I don't know where you are at this morning. I don't know what internal struggles, weaknesses, and temptations you are experiencing. But I do know that 2020 has been hard for everyone. And I am willing to bet that it has exposed, within each one of us, weaknesses and areas of sin that we are prone to fall into. And I am willing to bet that if we are honest it has also exposed things in our life that we are desperately clinging to besides Christ.

For me it has continually exposed my tendency toward anger and frustration, and it has exposed my general habit of running to electronic entertainment as a means of escape.

But wherever we are this morning, I want us all to remember that we have something better. We have a perfect Savior and high priest, Jesus Christ who sees our deepest need, feels our deepest weaknesses, and realizes that we are harassed and hurting.

Yet, he didn't leave us there. Instead, he lived a perfect life on our behalf, died in our place, and he sits at the right hand of God. As a result, we can now come to him to receive the fullness of life, joy, and help even in our deepest and hardest times of need.

So won't you come and cling to him this morning. Fight the good fight of faith and put your full hope and trust in him. And live with the assurance that, because of Christ, you're loved and cared for beyond measure by your heavenly Father.

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As it says in Romans 8:38-39

[38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let's pray