

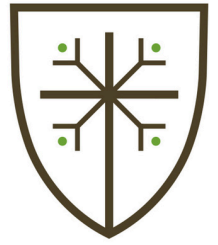
CLOSER ATTENTION

The Journey Home Through Hebrews



An Ordinary Time Sermon Series | Fall 2026

SERMON NOTES



October 4, 2026

SERMON INFO

TITLE

"The Damned Spot"

PREACHER

Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt

TEXTS

Isaiah 59:1-4, 15-17, 20

Hebrews 9:11-14, 10:11-18

Mark 5:24-34

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the dead works you keep coming back to try to feel clean and acceptable?
2. What was an encounter with radical forgiveness that left you changed? How did it make you feel?

SERMON IN SUMMARY

The central passages of Hebrews this morning examine a conscience that accuses us of our distance from God, prompting the question that guides the sermon: What can conquer an evil conscience?

The Lesson that Blood Teaches

The book of Hebrews explains that Jesus is better than the Old Testament law, priests, kings, and revelations of God that first-century Christians were tempted to return to; in the chapters studied today, we see that the author of Hebrews presents Jesus as the better sacrifice. Since the Levitical system's inception, sacrifices for the atonement of sin have been offered over and over again, illustrating that blood is the answer to the question of how a sinful people can live in the presence of a holy God. However, the cycle of shedding blood and making sacrifices never ended; it was never enough. This somber note brings up the negative connotations of blood, mainly brokenness, guilt, and stain.

Our Old Testament reading weaves these qualities together when the prophet states that Israel is not exempt from the brokenness, guilt, and stain of the world; they too are defiled. The use of "defiled" emphasizes that not only is Israel but all humanity with her, including us today, are deeply fallen. We are not victims of the brokenness of the world, but participants in it, perpetuating the brokenness, deepening the guilt, darkening the stain. That is why the sacrifices needed to be completed over and over, whether the sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus or the modern equivalents: the dead works that we use to drown out an evil conscience, reminding us of what is untrue, that we need to work harder at our jobs, parent better, curate our image, and apologize or be likeable. These ancient and modern works were not enough, and that is why a better sacrifice was needed.

The Change that Blood Brings

The positive connotation of blood is that it is associated with life, and, through Jesus' sacrifice, we are covered with his new life. And this is the only way to wash away the brokenness, guilt, and stain. The weight and seriousness of every and all sin, from the least to the worst, is deserving of wrath in God's eyes, which is why atonement, especially with Jesus' fulfilling and perfect atonement through his suffering and death on the cross, is needed. Clothed in his blood, we learn that forgiveness needs suffering, either through "justice" (the inflictor of the wrong experiences the same hurt and pain he or she themselves inflicted) or through forgiveness (when the hurt person absorbs all the pain from the wrong done and does not perpetuate it further). Experiencing the latter, when you are the one who hurt someone or did something so irrecoverably wrong, is a profound experience that one cannot come away from unchanged. So we must let ourselves be changed because we are free from our pasts, our wrongdoings, our hurt once and for all for the new life we are adorned with through Jesus' redemption. There is no other act we can do to drown out the lies of an evil conscience. Instead, we can dwell in this new positional holiness of redemption before God, allow it and the Spirit to form new desires in us, desires to forgive, to obey, to love as we have been loved.

An application is to forgive as we have been forgiven, abstaining from the temptation to make a momentarily gratifying retaliation and to instead absorb the suffering that forgiveness causes. In doing so, we support the work of the Spirit of God in our souls.