

A New Heart and a New Start

Bible Verses Referenced: Hebrews 10:1-25, John 13:34, Psalm 46, Jeremiah 31:33-34, Luke 22:19-20

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the gift of Your Word and the ministry that it has in our lives as we prayed in the colic that we would read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. And so we pray that You would help us to chew on Your Scriptures and to get it into our hearts and our minds and to our system and even into our guts so that we would want to follow You and obey and to live for You and for Your Word and Your promises.

And so we ask the preaching of Your Word would be Your Word for the sake and glory of Your Son, Jesus, in His name we pray. Amen. Well, welcome. It's great to see all of you. We're coming to the last of our sermon series on the Book of Hebrews today. And part of the if I were to sum up what the Book of Hebrews is about. Number one, it's a sermon. We don't exactly know who preached it.

It could have been actually one of it might be one of the books of the Bible that was written by a female. Some scholars speculate that it could have been Priscilla, Priscilla and Aquila that wrote the book of Hebrews. But we don't know who wrote it, but it was a sermon that was preached at the church with a significant concern.

And the concern is that human beings, us, members of the Church, we tend to gravitate away from significant relationships in our life, and especially our relationship with God. And so the concern is that members of the church are drifting away as the language that he uses, or she.

That we are ever so subtly moving away from God rather than coming closer to Him, becoming more intimate with the Lord, drawing near. Now, why does that happen in people's lives? Why do people drift away? As you think about it, and one of the things I want to invite you to think about your own life, actually, right now, an evaluative question.

Am I drifting away from the Lord right now or am I drawing near? Because you're going one or two directions, aren't you? There's no neutrality when it comes to our personal relationships. You think about this with your spouse or your friends or your brothers and sisters, your parents, whoever it is, we're either getting closer to them or we're subtly moving away from them. So what about you? What about me?

Am I drifting away or am I drawing near? So we think about this. But why is it? Why would we drift away? Well, one reason is for the experience like our Old Testament reading of Hannah, who was a person that was struggling with great tragedy in her life. As a woman, she was wanting to have a child and was suffering from severe infertility and couldn't, for some reason, have a child.

And it was causing her tremendous despair and heartbreak. And so sometimes people go through tragedies and difficulties in life. They go through suffering. And the sufferings of life, the shocks of tragedies and difficulties cause people to drift away. The wonderful testimony of that passage from the Old Testament is that rather than allowing her heart to grow cold to the Lord, she actually becomes vulnerable to God and makes herself available.

She runs closer to God in the tragedy and the difficulty. And in her own words, when the priest is thinking she's just mumbling in a drunken stupor in the temple, she says, "I'm not drunk. I'm pouring out my soul to the Lord." Wow. Hannah was a person who was drawing near in the difficult time.

And I've seen that happen a lot when people are on the sickbed or they're going through hard times. A lot of times it actually becomes an occasion of intimacy with the Lord where they cry out to the Lord, like, "Hannah, I need you right now. I'm going through a hard time." The Hebrew, the church that is being written to here had gone through a time of persecution for their faith.

And actually, what the writer of Hebrews acknowledges is that that actually was also a time of them being close to the Lord, that they were intimate with the Lord at that time, and they were drawing not only close to Him, but they were huddling up as a congregation. And because of the challenges and persecutions and the sufferings, they were drawing near. Now, I think one of the biggest problems when we start to drift away is actually when times are going well.

When everything's going great in life, and we've got the busyness happening and the distractions and the temptations, and you know the gators are winning football finally. And you suddenly start getting interested in them again or whatever it is. You know Whether it's our hobbies or a relationship, a new friend.

But what happens sometimes in the good times is just ever so subtly, we start to slip away from that most significant relationship that we should be attending to our relationship with the Lord. I've been reading this book by a seminary classmate of mine. His name's Chuck de Grote. It's a great book. It's called The Healing Within. And one of the things that he says is that it's really all about connection.

And one of the problems that he sees, he's a therapist, a counselor, and he teaches counseling in seminary at this point. And one of the things that he observes in his practice is that addictive behaviors in people's lives is what he calls pseudoconnection. It's a great line in the book that says, sobriety is not the opposite of addiction as is often promoted in our culture, where you just need to pull yourself up by the bootstraps and quit cold turkey and so on.

Not that that's a bad thing if you can accomplish it to do if you're addicted to something. But really, what the opposite of addictive behaviors and addictions are in our lives is connection. That we are lacking connection with the more important and more significant either the Lord or our spouses or our families or our church. We're missing those connections.

We're drifting away from those important, significant connections, and we're drifting away and connecting because our hearts will connect to pseudo-connections is what he calls them.

I love the Saint Augustine says of our hearts, "They're restless until they find their rest in thee, O Lord, until they find their rest in God." This is the message of the book of Hebrews is that we are to enter into the rest of the Lord and to find our fulfillment and our connectivity and our attunement of our hearts with Him.

I do a lot of premarital counseling with young couples and older couples too that are getting remarried. Same principles, same principles are necessary. But we often go through a book called The Five Love Languages, which talks about the different ways in which we all speak love and how we're this is the big takeaway of the Five Love Languages. You need to learn how to speak love in the other person's love language, not your own.

Like when I was first engaged to my wife, I went for Christmas. I bought her a fishing pole and she cried. And I said to my mom, I'm like, "Mom, you know, what did I do wrong?" And she says, "Son, you don't buy something for your wife that you want for Christmas." Oh, okay. I thought that was a good idea. So that's when I first learned the importance of the love languages.

But one of the things that Gary Chapman says in that book is that all of us have a love tank. And what that represents is our intimacy level. And those are the good feelings. Like when we describe ourselves as feeling in love with someone, our love tank is full. And when you're newly dating or just getting excited about a relationship, the love tank is full. It's often like for my wife and I, we just went on a little vacation.

Thank you for letting us have a little time off this past weekend. And I will tell you that that was so good for us to just be by ourselves and focused on one another and not distracted by other things. And our love tank just filled up a little bit more. It's great. And so one of the things that happens, though, is the love tank can go down not just with our marriages, but also with our relationship with God.

And so the writer of Hebrews is at a point of tremendous conclusion here where he's saying, "Jesus has done everything that is necessary for us to enter back into that intimate relationship with the Lord." And he's primarily done that with the heart of the gospel, to bring us back home to Him. Listen to the way he puts it, "Every priest stands day after day at His service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins.

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God." So at the heart of the Lord's redemption project of restoring the relationship of us back to Him stands the single act of Jesus Christ dying on the cross, forgiving us of our sins, to bring us back into a reconciled relationship with God.

And that actually then brings about two things for us, two opportunities to come back to the Lord, two profound truths that are our hope as Christians, and it's at the heart of the New Covenant. Those, very simply put, are a new heart and a new start. Listen to the way that the writer of Hebrews puts it, "This is the covenant that I make with them after those days," says the Lord.

"I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." And he also adds, "I will remember their sins and lawless deeds no more. For where there is forgiveness of sin, there is no longer any offering for sin." In other words, what Jesus has accomplished in the cross, the resurrection, the outpouring of the Spirit, all of it together, is a new heart and a new start.

When I was a kid, I would mess up sometimes and do bad things as a little child. And I had these bushes that were in front of our house. And it was just like the Garden of Eden. You know I would run and hide from my parents and I would go and hide in the bushes. And it was a dirty place and a place where I could get away. But I remember very vividly one time my mom was looking for me and she was calling out and trying to find me.

And I was not I was not giving a peep. I was just in the, you know, hovering and cowering and hiding in the bushes. And eventually, her tone became such that she got me to come out. And it was so wonderful that you know she put her arms around me and sort of dusted me off and welcomed me back.

And that's what our sin does to us, actually. It's the Garden of Eden over and over again in our lives where we mess up, we don't do right, we get distant from our heavenly parent, and we run and hide. I had a preaching professor, Steve Brown, who once said, "You know, God or it's a lot easier to hug a dirty kid than a stiff kid." You know, the problem for the Lord, because of what Jesus has done on the cross, our problem is not our sins.

Jesus, once for all this is the writer of Hebrews, "One time, for all time, has paid the price in full so that we have a new start. The dirt is not a problem." The problem is actually the hard heart. It's the self-hiding and the running away and the stiffness.

And so the Lord welcomes us in and puts us on His lap and dusts us off of our dirt and our shame and our guilt and says, "I have taken care of all of that. Come back into relationship with me. Your dirt is not the problem. I've paid the price in full. You have a fresh and a clean start, not just this time, but for all time.

And then the Lord takes that cold and distant and hard heart and He says, and He puts His Spirit in us and revives it and gives us a new heart. This is the message of the New Covenant. And so where the writer of Hebrews is actually leading us is to say that in light of all of that, there is a maintenance that needs to happen in our relationship, in a sense, to keep our love tank full with God.

And that maintenance, that time, away to just be with Him is actually what we're doing right now. Where we get to hear the Word of God speaking to us. And it's not just you know the God of the Old Testament that we get to hear these wonderful passages from the Old Testament. But it's the God who came to us in the flesh, Jesus, who stands in the midst of our assembly and says to us, "You don't need that old temple anymore.

I'm going to tear down the stones of this mighty temple because I have paid the price and the sacrificial system is no longer necessary. And we continually, every single Sunday, hear the words of our Lord and Savior, addressing our hearts and our minds and our bodies, calling us in to reconciled relationship to Him through the ministry of the Word.

Then inviting us to what the writer of Hebrews calls the throne of grace, which is this place right here, the sanctuary of the Lord. Actually, the way he puts it is, this is just like a teleporter that takes us up into the heavenly sanctuary that is not made with human hands, but is the place where our Lord Jesus Christ lives in His resurrected body to intercede for us.

And so what the writer of Hebrews invites us in chapter 10 is to draw near to that throne of grace and enter in through what he describes as the veil of his flesh. It's interesting symbolically. You know what this is called right here? This is called veiling the chalice.

It comes right out of the imagery of Book of Hebrews and the Old Temple, and that we are reserving that mystery of the blood and the body of Jesus Christ, and that after we're done with this ministry of the Word phase of our worship service, we are going to have a consummatory experience together, brothers and sisters. We are going to be able to come and commune with the living God.

This is the way that the writer of Hebrews puts it, "Since, my friends, we have confidence." Why do we have confidence? Because of the gospel. We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain that is through His flesh. And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

Draw near to the throne of grace. He's inviting you to give your heart to Him. When Jesus had the words of institution at the Last Supper, and He says, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of Me." When He was giving them the cup, he says, "This is the cup of the new covenant. This is it.

This is the forgiveness of your sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of Me." What we are literally doing when we come here is not only are we remembering in the sense of remembering the gospel and what He's done for us and the new heart and the new start.

But we are literally in other words, we are coming together as His body, His living members to commune as the body of Christ with the body and blood of Christ, the resurrected temple, and the Holy Spirit is pleased to dwell.

It's a very intimate thing that we get to participate in every single week. And so the writer of Hebrews, he has these three encouragements for us. He says, "Let us approach. First of all, let us approach the throne of grace with a true heart. Let us come in with confidence of what Jesus has done for us that we can not just get stopped at the Holy of Holies by the veil, but go through the veil of His flesh up into the holy sanctuary of the Lord.

With hearts that have been sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, our bodies washed with pure water. Then he has another encouragement. He says, "Let us hold fast.

Don't drift away, but let's stay strong in our faith and our confession of the truth of God's Word to our hope and the promises of God without wavering for he who is promised is faithful." And then he says, "Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as in the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day approaching." I love the words of John Chrysostom who says of the gathering of the faithful, the church when it comes together, "In the gathering of the faithful, grace flows abundantly." Isn't that beautiful?

In the gathering of the faithful, grace flows abundantly. Why? For Christ is present. His Spirit, working in the prayers, the Psalms, the preaching, and in the sacramental mysteries. Christ is present. And so we come into His presence and we have this incredible privilege as His chosen people to experience His gift and His Holy Spirit.

I'll end with the words of one of our beloved hymns that we sing sometimes, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing." There's a line in it that says this, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Mo, here's my heart. Oh, take and seal it.

Seal it for thy courts above." May that be our prayer today as we come into communion with the Lord, "Here's my heart, Lord. Take and seal it.

Seal it for thy courts above."