

## ***“An Anchor for the Soul: Shadow of Christ”***

*Hebrews 10:1-18*

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • March 6, 2016

Before photography was invented, the only way to record what people looked like was by portrait. If you were wealthy, you hired an artist who would spend many hours painting your portrait with oil paints. But during the mid-1700's, a type of portrait became popular and it really is still popular today – it's the silhouette. I'm sure you've seen these. They are a generally a person's profile and they are either painted or cut from paper and they are usually black against a light or white background. Because there is no detail on the inside of the portrait, only on the edge, a silhouette portrait is basically a picture of a person's shadow. One of the reasons they became so popular is because they were a fast and inexpensive way to capture someone's likeness.

Hebrews 10 begins, “For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.” This verse makes clear that there is a continuity between the Old and New Testaments. There are some Christians who would say that the Old Testament doesn't really matter because it's been replaced by the New Testament. That couldn't be farther from the truth. The Old Testament is extremely important because ultimately it's all about Jesus.

On the evening of the first Easter, the day Jesus rose from the dead, Luke tells us in chapter 24 that two of Jesus' followers were walking on the road between Jerusalem and Emmaus and that Jesus joined them. But they didn't know it was him. Verse 27 says, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning himself.” The Bible also tells us that in the 40 days before He ascended, Jesus taught the apostles from the Old Testament Scriptures and what they learned appears throughout the New Testament.

The problem, of course, is that the picture of Christ in the Old Testament system of worship and sacrifices is only a shadow, a sketchy outline, a silhouette. Silhouette portraits are often able to give us some idea of what a person looks like. Some people have such distinctive profiles that we can identify them even though we have never met them. For example, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln's silhouettes are readily identified by most people.

The only reason we can identify anyone by their silhouette is because there is a real person that it represents. The truth is, though, that it's hard to learn much about a person from only their silhouette. If we have a painting of that person we can see the person in much more detail. A photograph can give us even more detail about how a person looks. But the best thing is to be able to look at the real person! So let's apply that to God. The reality is God in heaven – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Verse 1 refers to this as “the true form of these realities.” We can't see God in heaven but we have a portrait of Him in the Bible. He came to earth in way that we could understand. He came as one of us, and his name is Jesus. That portrait gives us a pretty good understanding of who God is and what He's like. Jesus said, “If you've seen me you've seen the Father.” If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. The portrait we have in the Bible is not the same as seeing Jesus face to face, but it's close.

If the New Testament is like a painting, the Old Testament system of animal sacrifices and Temple worship is like a silhouette or shadow. One commentator put it like this: “The Old Testament is the reality in Christ projected backward, redemptively speaking.” The Law is the shadow of Jesus in history. And if the sacrifices are only a shadow, they can't be expected to be adequate. We need the real thing. The writer of Hebrews has been making that very point for the past three chapters. Here

he says, “it can never...make perfect those who draw near.” He goes on to say that if the animal sacrifices had been able to solve the problem of sin and separation from God they would not have had to do them over and over again. In fact, what we discover is that instead of taking away guilt for sins the sacrifices reminded them every year of their sin.

The rest of this passage, then, points us to what God really wants from us. God commanded the animal sacrifices in order to show us our need for something greater, for a savior like *us*. It doesn't take much thought to realize that sacrificing a helpless animal will not solve the problem of sin and in fact in several places in the Old Testament God makes it clear that His desire is not the sacrifice of animals that He wants, it's our hearts and minds that He really wants.

There are two theological concepts in this passage that I want to touch on briefly. The first is *justification* and the second is *sanctification*. Justification is a legal term and it simply means that God has declared us forgiven. This is what Jesus accomplished on the cross and the sign and symbol of our justification is baptism. The sacrament of baptism points us to what God has done for us that we could never do for ourselves. That's why we baptize babies and it's why we are only baptized once. The reality that baptism points to is something that God does and He never needs to do it again.

The other concept we find in this passage is *sanctification*, which means to be made holy. Sanctification is a life-long process and it's never complete until that day we draw our last breath and are ushered directly into the presence of Christ. We are never complete in this life but our goal is to move toward greater holiness, becoming more like Christ. The sign of our sanctification is the Lord's Supper, communion, which we will celebrate in a few minutes. Because we are never finished, we need to take communion as often as possible. Where baptism is entirely about God's grace, communion involves faith.

Our passage ends with another contrast between the priesthood of Jesus and that of the Temple priests. There were no chairs in the Temple because the priests never sat down. They were always in motion while serving. Verse 11 says, “every priest *stands* daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” The priest doesn't sit because the work is never done. By contrast, “when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.” This is what He meant when He said on the cross, “It is finished.” The work of salvation was done. There is nothing more that anyone needs to do or even can do. Jesus did it all.

So let's come back to this question of what God wants from us. 1 Samuel 15:22 says, “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen better than the fat of rams.” Psalm 51 says, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart.” What God wants is joyful obedience. What He wants from us is worship! I don't mean just going through the motions, but real, passionate worship. As Jesus says to the woman at the well, “the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.” God wants us to do His will. In verse 7, Jesus says, “Behold, I have come to do your will, O God.” That should be your personal motto. God, I have come to do your will.

So for the next few moments I want us to reflect on our own hearts. I want us to have an opportunity for these words to sink in so here's what I want you to do. Go ahead and bow your heads and close your eyes and reflect for a moment. Where has God been calling *you* to obey lately? This is not about guilt. I don't want you to sit there feeling guilty about what you haven't done. But I want you to seriously think about your life with God lately. Where has He been calling you to greater commitment? To more active prayer? Has He been calling you to be more active in connecting with other believers to support and encourage one another? Has He been calling you to help serve

others or to give to His work? Now here's the harder question— where have you just been going through the motions? Again, this is a guilt free zone right now. That means it should be an elbow-free zone, if you know what I mean. This is just between you and God. He has already forgiven you. He says, "I will remember their sins no more."

Silently pray, "God, I have come to do your will. Show me where I've just been going

through the motions. Show me how to worship you with my whole heart and mind and soul and strength. Show me how to love the people around me every day. Show me how I can make a greater commitment to your work in this church. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation."

*Amen*