

“An Anchor for the Soul: Pep Rally”

Hebrews 10:19-25

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • March 13, 2016

The great Reformer John Calvin begins his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* this way: “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” He goes on to explain that we cannot understand who we are apart from knowing who God is. We find this idea throughout the Bible, too. As you study the Bible you will find that some Scriptures probe into who God is and what He’s like. That’s what we’ve studied in the last seven chapters of Hebrews where we have learned about the divinity of Jesus and His work on the cross.

But then some Scriptures probe into who *we* are and, more importantly, who we should be as individuals and as a church. Today we come to an important shift in Hebrews as the writer transitions from explanation to application. Since chapter four he has gone into great detail explaining the work of Jesus as prophet, priest, and king. We now understand why the Old Testament system of worship and sacrifice was so important but also why it’s not necessary any more since they were only shadows of Christ. We learned how Jesus is the perfect High Priest, greater than all the other priests, and also the perfect sacrifice, fulfilling everything that the ancient sacrifices pointed to.

Our passage this morning begins, “therefore.” Pastor Rick Warren says that whenever the Bible says *therefore* you should stop and see what it’s there for. In this case, he’s telling us why all of that matters to us, why we should pay attention to it. We’ve gotten the *what* and now we’re going to get the *so what* or the *why*. We’re going to find out how the things we’ve learned about God over the last three months impacts our lives every day. Here we are given three exhortations, three things that we as followers of Jesus should do.

The first one takes up half of the passage. “Therefore, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, *and* since

we have a great priest over the house of God, let us *draw near* with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” Because of who Jesus is and because of what He’s done for you, draw near! Pastor John Piper says, “The great aim of this writer is that we get near God, that we have fellowship with him, that we not settle for a Christian life at a distance from God, that God not be a distant thought, but a near and present reality, that we experience what the old Puritans called communion with God.”

There are two reasons given that we can have the confidence to draw near to God. First, Jesus gives us *access*. “We have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.” Before, the people had limited access to God and only through a priest. Now we have direct access to God without fear of being destroyed. We can go to Him in prayer any time, confident that He hears us and will respond.

The second reason we can draw near to God is because we have an *advocate*. “We have a great priest over the house of God.” Unlike the Temple priests who were always moving because the work was never finished, Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father, always interceding for you. We are able to draw near “with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Whatever you’ve done in the past you can come to God with a clear conscience. He knows and has already dealt with it.

The obvious question, then, is how do we draw near to God? The answer is worship. Jesus reminds us that God’s greatest commandment is that we shall love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. You and I were made to worship. It’s our greatest privilege. And it’s also our greatest responsibility. God demands our worship. The first part of the Ten Commandments, which we heard a few minutes ago, is all about worshiping God. The truth is

that when you really learn to worship you experience the presence of God in a way that changes you. True worship doesn't begin at 11am on Sunday, it begins every morning the moment you wake up. It's an attitude of the heart. Verse 22 says, "let us draw near with a true or sincere heart in full assurance of faith."

When you come to worship, you should come with a heart focused on worshipping God, what some of the older writers call "undivided affections." That's the point of the Call to Worship at the beginning of our service. It's a call from God to worship Him. The Prayer of Confession reminds us that our hearts have been sprinkled clean.

The second exhortation in this passage is in verse 23. I'm paraphrasing but it goes something like this: "Because of Jesus, therefore let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful." He's concerned here with truth and more importantly with us knowing the truth, confessing the truth, and letting the truth shape our lives. We discover the truth when we learn about the One who said, "I am the truth." This is a call for each of us to know the Scriptures. Read them. Meditate on them. Memorize them! Verse 23 says, "He who promised is faithful." Unless you study your Bible you won't know what those promises are.

It's not enough to know the truth, you have to live it. There are many people who can quote the Bible beautifully but they don't live it. We call them hypocrites. In his famous book, *How Should We Then Live?*, Francis Schaeffer said, "What [people] are in their thought world determines how they act...The results of their thought world flow through their fingers or from their tongues into the external world. This is true of Michelangelo's chisel, and it is true of a dictator's sword." What you truly think and believe will show up in how you act. Holding fast to our confession of hope means acting on the hope we believe.

The third exhortation in this passage begins in verse 24. Because of Jesus, therefore, "let us consider how to stir up one another to love and

good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another." Again we have the pattern of think and then act. "Consider" means to think. He's telling us to think about other people. When you join the church you make a commitment to all the other members of the church. You have an obligation to them.

On Easter Sunday after worship the pastor was shaking hands as people left and when a particular gentleman approached the pastor said, "Joe, you need to join the Army of the Lord." Joe said, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, pastor." The pastor then said, "Well then how come I only see you at Christmas and Easter?" The man then whispered, "I'm in the secret service." As Americans we tend to think in very individualistic ways. We have been trained to think like discerning consumers, finding the best value. That tends to carry over into our church life. What church offers the goods and services that meet my needs. You won't find that anywhere in the Bible. God doesn't have a secret service. Instead you find that the church is really a family or a team. A players on a great sports team will encourage each other to be their best and as a result the whole team is better.

As followers of Jesus our job is to make sure that the other Christians that God has given us are stirred up to be their best. Let me ask you – by the time you leave here today, who will be strengthened in their walk with Christ because of you? Who will want to go serve because you were here? That thought should be in the front of your mind every Sunday. Now before you get too down on yourself, notice the importance of showing up. Verse 25 warns against neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some. Regularly attending worship gives you a huge head start on encouraging others. One of the ideas that people sometimes get is that they don't have to go to church to be a Christian. Kent Hughes points out that that may be true but that a person doesn't have to go home to be married, either. Then he says, "But in both cases

if he does not, he will have a very poor relationship.”

1 Corinthians 13 is the famous “love chapter” that’s often read at weddings. The chapter ends, “So now faith, hope and love abide, these three. And the greatest of these is love.” Faith is the gift from God that brings us into a relationship with Him. Faith is how we

draw near for a life of worship. Hope is an anchor for the soul, securing us to heaven. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.” And love, which Paul says is the greatest of these three, brings us together to encourage one another and stir each other up to love and good works.

Amen