

Hebrews - The Book of Better Things

September 8, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled Hebrews, the book of better things. Thank you to Dave, Rhonda, Dianne and Don for being part of the video. The scripture reading is Hebrews 1, 1 to 4. Happy birthday this week to Glynnis.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Welcome. We are glad you're with us. A lot of our people are traveling and the way this is maybe the last weekend before the Labor Day weekend, so the beginning of school and we wish them safety in their travels and look forward to their return.

Happy birthday, Jan. Yes. We have a Wednesday evening Bible class on the Psalms of Jesus. Everyone is welcome. There is a baby shower coming up on the 22nd at 3 o'clock in the Fellowship Hall. You can contribute to the group gift to Janet and RSVP to Jan. The J-Squad. Yes, the J-Squad. Ruth has sent her email bulletin and it is posted on the Family Bulletin Board.

I had some prayer requests. Leonard has moved to Palliative Care Unit in St. Peter's Hospital in Hamilton and he would welcome visitors. Goldie, that's Ruby's sister, will be moving into Palliative Care also and our prayers are with the Whitehead and Whitfield families. And we continue to pray for those who are in mourning for loved ones that have passed on. The Kirkland family, the Cook family, the Ellis, Whitfield and Smith families, or Kendra.

We are thankful that you're here. We read a verse from Hebrews 12, verse 28. "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe. Our God is a consuming fire." Let's pray.

Father, may we be overwhelmed with gratitude and praise for the gift of life, for the gift of Jesus, our salvation. May our joy overflow in your praise, your service, and your love. Help us to recognize your presence in each moment and may we reveal your blessings to those around us through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Song Leader Comment

Good morning, everyone. We have an anniversary that did not make it into the bulletin. Jack and Marie are celebrating 58 years on the 27th. So congratulations to you for that. And we are continuing as well to pray for Jack as he is dealing with just, boy, oh, boy, does he ever have a rough time of his health. So we're keeping him in our prayers.

Communion

I'm reading a bit of a hodgepodge of scriptures this morning and they make flow together in my mind, but I'm hoping that they'll also flow together in yours, I'm not sure. Okay, the first one is the wedding in Cana.

The Jews have rules about ritual washing, and for this purpose, six stone water jars were there, each one large enough to hold between 20 and 30 gallons. Six in the Bible means the imperfection, it's the imperfection of the old law, it's unable to purify the conscience. So there were six stone washing jars there, which would represent the old law. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill these jars with water, they fill them to the brim, which represents abundance." And then he told them, "Now draw some water out and take it to the man in charge of the feast." They took him the water, which now had turned into wine, and he tasted it. And wine represents joy. He did not know where the wine had come from. But of course, the servants who had drawn out of the water knew, so he called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone else serves the best wine first, and after the guests have drunk a lot, he serves the ordinary wine, but you have kept the best wine until now."

Jesus performed this first miracle in Cana. There he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him. His glory, his distinction, his adoration, his splendor, his radiance, his magnificence, all of that was revealed that day. And I think that's why that was his very first miracle. And now I want to flip back and read about the parable of the great feast.

"There was once a man who was giving a great feast to which he invited many people. When it was time for the feast, he sent his servants to tell his guests, "Come, everything is ready." But they all began one after another to make excuses. The first one told the servant, "I have bought a field and must go and look at it. Please accept my apologies." Another one said, "I have bought five pairs of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please accept my apologies." Another one said, "I have gotten married, and for that reason I cannot come." The servant went back and told all this to his master. The master was furious and said to his servant, "Hurry out to the streets and alleys, to the towns and bring back the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame."

I think that we can be like those first people at times. They began one after another to make excuses. "I've bought a field. I've done this." We can get so wound up in what's going on in the world and our worldly needs and our worldly desires that we shove Jesus onto the back burner. I think it happens with everybody. My guess is that in this world there's a lot more people that believe that there's a God but keep shoving him onto the back burner than there are atheists. But I might be wrong, but I wouldn't be surprised. Then it says, "There's the people that shove him onto the back burner." But then he says, "Go out and bring back the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame."

When I was a child I knew that there were people in the world that were poorer than us but I had never met them. I don't know that I have yet. But anyway, there were people out there who were poor. And being poor, it can be humbling and it can be humiliating both. And if any of you have been to see Pam, you know that being crippled can also be humbling and it can be humiliating.

My sister is blind. She's not 100% blind but pretty close to it. So when I go to visit her, I go and I stand beside her and she'll say, "Who's that?" And as soon as she hears my voice, she usually knows. She's getting where she doesn't because she's always got other problems too. But she knows when she hears my voice that it's me. And she gets a bowl of grapes every day. She lives in a long-term care home and they bring her a bowl of grapes every day. And it's always interesting to watch her eat her grapes because she eats her grapes. And then when she gets to the bottom of the bowl, she feels around in the bottom of the bowl to see if there's any more grapes. That's the only way she has of knowing for sure. And she doesn't like to go and eat in the dining room because that's humiliating because it's hard to get your food, to find your food and get it to your mouth without getting it on your clothes when you're blind. And she finds that. She knows that that's happening and she finds that humiliating. I know a man who used to run an awful lot but now when I see him, he is walking with a limp and he's lame. And I can tell that he's in pain.

And so I think this is what this is saying is if we want to be followers of Christ, we first have to be spiritually poor, spiritually crippled, spiritually blind or lame before we're going to be willing to give up everything and follow Christ. And I think that's what that scripture is about.

Then in Colossians, I flip to Colossians 2, or also not 2 but also, it says, "Under Christ's control the whole body is nourished and held together by its joints and ligaments and it grows as God wants it to grow. You have died with Christ and you are set free and we are set free from our sins because of Christ. And so therefore, we have some obligations. You've been raised to life with Christ, so set your hearts on the things that are in heaven. Don't be like those first people in this last scripture who set their hearts on things on this earth. "Oh, I bought five pairs of oxen" or "Oh, I've just got married" or whatever. So I can't be bothered with you right now, Christ. It says, "Set your heart on things that are in heaven where Christ sits on his throne at the right side of God. Keep your minds fixed on things there, not on things here on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ and God. Your real life is Christ and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory."

We have died. When we're baptized, we die and our real life is Christ living in us. The abundance from the first scripture I read that Christ gives life and he gives it abundantly and that's all because of what happened on the cross.

And I don't know, I just think it's kind of beautiful actually. And the last scripture I'm going to read is, "Never let go of loyalty and faithfulness. Tie them around your neck, write them on your heart. If you do this, both God and people will be pleased with you. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do and he will show you the right way. Never let yourself think that you are wiser than you are. Simply obey the Lord and refuse to do wrong. If you do, it will be good medicine, healing your wounds and easing your pains." And I think that's your spiritual wounds and your spiritual pains. "Honor the Lord by making him an offering from the best of all that your lamb produces. If you do, your barns will be filled with grain and you will have too much wine to store it all. The wine is the joy. You will have abundance." And I don't know that that means that you're going to be the richest person in the world financially, but you're going to be rich in your heart. And all of that connects to Christ's death and what the impact that has on us.

Dear God, thank you so much for Jesus and thank you so much for his taking our sins to the cross and for his forgiveness and for his grace. And we pray that we will live the lives of people who have died with Christ and who have risen with Christ and who have life and have it abundantly because of what he's done for us. And we pray that we will be lights in the world because of what Christ has done for us.

Scripture Reading

Hebrews 1:1-4

As you know, the reading is from Hebrews, verses, first chapter, verses 1 to 4. In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things and through whom He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. So He became as much superior to the angels as a name He has inherited is superior to theirs. Amen.

Sermon

Hebrews - The Book of Better Things

Good morning everyone. Thank you very much for being with us. I'm very grateful for theologians that help us to know scripture very, very well. N.T. Wright is a brilliant person and goes deep into scriptures. But there's one Bible chapter, in fact book itself, no one knows who writes it. No one knows who wrote the book of Hebrews. Years past, it was accredited by Paul. But the majority of scholars would suggest that's not him. He doesn't write this way. So there's still a mystery in the Bible.

We don't know who writes this book. Could be a man, could be a woman. Doesn't really matter, I suppose, who writes it. Because what they say is quite profound. The overall theme of Hebrews is Jesus is sufficient for all of us. He's superior to all things. He is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And because of that, he wants us to stay faithful to him at all times, even in great difficulties. So what I'm gonna do this morning is just kind of look at a variety of scriptures, all from the book of Hebrews. And it begins this way, that Jesus is superior to even the angels. In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets. We're looking at that in our Bible class. And many times in various ways. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son, Jesus Christ, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he made the universe. Go back to Genesis. In the beginning, God created. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And after providing purification for sins, he sits down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. So that Jesus himself becomes much superior to the angels. And the word angels are gonna be used often in this book. And he says, "For which of the angels "did God ever say, you

are my son? "Or today, I become your father? "Or again, I will be his father, and he will be my son?" And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

In speaking of angels, he says, "Angels make winds, angels can make fires." But about his son, he says, "You're thrown, O God, will last forever and ever. "And righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. "You have loved righteousness, and you hate wickedness. "In the beginning, O Lord, "you laid the foundations of the earth, "and the heavens are the work of your hands. "They will perish, but God will remain forever." And then again, talking about angels, said, "Are not angels simply ministering spirits "sent by God to serve those who are inheriting salvation?" We have angels around us, and angels would never want us to worship them. But angels are around us all the time, even when we don't know it. We don't know what they've done for us. But angels in this book is repeated over and over and over.

And because of the angels doing incredible things in our lives, here's what he says. "We must pay more careful attention therefore "to what we have heard, so that we don't drift away. "How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. And God also testified to it by signs, wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributing according to his will. But it's not angels that we worship. And so in this book, a profound book, I wanna just highlight some of these scriptures.

In chapter three, "Therefore, holy brothers and sisters "who share in the heavenly calling," that's us, "fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest "whom we confess Jesus himself. "He was faithful to the one who appointed him, "just as Moses was faithful to God in God's house, "and was found worthy of greater honor than Moses, "just as a builder of a house "has greater honor than the house itself. "For every house is built by someone." But God is the builder of everything. He is the builder of everything and faithful to the servant of God. And so he says, "Don't lose that faithfulness. "See to it, brothers and sisters, "that none of you has a sinful, leaving heart, "turning away from the living God." But here's what to do. Encourage one another daily, as long as it's called today, so that you will not be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Today, today, today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart as you did in the rebellion.

Speaking of the Old Testament, "Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest," this is where we stop, "his rest is that one day we will see him face to face. "Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest "still stands, let's be careful and not fall away. "The word of God is alive and active. "It's sharper than any two-edged sword. "It penetrates even to dividing the soul, the spirit, "the joints, the marrow. "It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. "Everything is uncovered and laid bare "before the eyes of him who must account."

That's a powerful scripture. I don't know who writes this book. Man, they sure knew a lot of stuff. They knew scripture, but most importantly, the focus is on Jesus, and the focus is serving the Lord to the best of our ability. The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to dividing the soul, the spirit, the joint, and the marrow, judging the very thoughts and intents of our heart. We are laid bare before God. Therefore, since we have this great high priest, who is Jesus, who has gone into heaven, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the face that we possess.

For we don't have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one, even though tempted in every way, has not sinned. It's this beautiful description of the wonderful spirit of God in this book of Hebrews. During the days of Jesus' life on earth, Jesus offered up prayers and petitions with loud voices and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he has given us an eternal salvation. And then he says this, whoever writes this letter, we have much to say about all of this, but it's hard to explain, because some people are slow to learn. And what I mean by that, I think, is what he's saying is, but people don't care. People don't care. A lot of people just don't care. Here's the word of God, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit living in us, and the word of God teaching us, but there are many who just don't care about that.

So let's go back to the beginning, and whoever he or she is that writes this book reminds us of these words. Therefore, let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity. Let's not lay again the foundation of repentance and so forth and so forth. We're already there. Let's move forward. It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God, to not back away, and repentance expressed in a wonderful way. Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things, diligence, faith, and patience.

And then he talks about an interesting man. His name is Melchizedek. He's a very interesting name. No one knows who he was. No one knows. He was a prophet that he never knew where he came from. No one knows where he came from. He didn't know where he came from. He was just there. And Melchizedek was a high priest. And somehow everybody knew he was a high priest. What he said made sense. But no worship did Melchizedek ever want upon himself. Melchizedek was a high priest. Everybody knew he was a high priest. And they watched how he lived. They listened to what he said. This high priest, and the focus, of course, was on God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Melchizedek was a king, a priest of God, and he blessed many. And people just knew he was this wonderful man. And so, in this book, it talks about the Old Testament. The former regulation has now been set aside. It was weak and useless because forgiveness of sins could not be given to us. Because of his oath, Jesus became a guarantee of our new covenant. A guarantee for our salvation. Unlike other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day. Okay, seems somewhat humorous to me every time I think of the scene, but it happens.

You remember back in the Old Testament particularly, there was sacrifices after sacrifices after sacrifices after sacrifices, and blood up to their knees, sacrificing, asking for forgiveness that would never ever come. Until Jesus comes into the world. Those poor priests, they must have washed their hands, I don't know how many times a day. And I hope they had really good soap. Because there was blood up to their elbows almost every day. And it was a sacrifice looking forward to what will come. You see, when we take communion, we don't actually have to offer somebody here as a body. Would somebody please come up and we'll just knock you off? And that's the death right there. Or blood, just drain the blood out of your body for that? No, no, not at all. But there was a lot of broken bodies. There was a lot of blood that was shed. But it all was focusing on the shed blood of Jesus.

And this mystery man comes into their world. Melchizedek. Who is he? A priest. But we don't know much about him at all. But he was the one that kept people on the straight and narrow, if you will. Reminding them that there would be a savior coming and his blood would be precious. It says this, "When Christ came as high priest "of the good things that are already here, "he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle "that is not made." That is to say, not part of this creation, meaning Jesus.

And I'm gonna read some scripture here. And the word blood, hope you don't mind on this, is used eight different times. Repeating is getting the message. Different times, eight different times. He did not enter by means of blood, of goats and calves, but he entered the most holy place. Once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal retention. The blood of goats and bulls and ashes, of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonial and clean, sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself, unblemished to God, cleanse our consciousness from acts that lead to death so that we may live and worship the loving God?

And then he says, again, "In the case of a will, "it's necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, "but a will is enforced only when someone has died. "It never takes effect while the one who is still living." This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses took the blood of calves and together with water and scarlet wool and branches, he said, "This is the blood of the covenant "which God has commanded you to keep." In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both of the tabernacle and everything used in the ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly all blood is for forgiveness. It was necessary then for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves are with better sacrifices. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary. That was only a copy of the true one, but he, talking about Jesus, entered

heaven itself. Thou to appear for us in God's presence, nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again the way the high priest enters the most holy place every year with blood that is not his own. So when Christ have to suffer many things against these things, just as man is destined to die once, and after that, to face the judgment, Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people, and he will appear again. To bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

So my question is, are we waiting for him? Old Testament, all the way to the new to now. Are we waiting for him? See, the sacrifices that they were shedding, bulls and goats and everything else, it really couldn't do anything. It was just pushing it ahead and pushing it ahead. And then when Christ comes, he is the eternal sacrifice. He doesn't have to sacrifice again and again. He has sacrificed for us. And he has sacrificed for us. And he has sacrificed for us. So let me start to wrap this up. Because of all of this, it's a call to remember it. It's a call to persevere. It's a call to share. Listen to what he says. "Therefore, brothers and sisters, "since we have confidence to enter the most holy place "by the blood of Jesus."

See, when we take communion and we drink that blood, which is not blood, but is blood, it's this sacrifice. Jesus shed his blood and he welcomes us to participate in that blood. The sacrifice of sins, the forgiveness of sins. And not to forget about it. In fact, there is a call to persevere. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus. And then he wants to go back again. He says, "Remember those earlier days "after you received the light "when you stood your ground in a grave?" Sometimes we're publicly exposed, insulted, persecuted, and so forth. But you hung in there. So do not throw away your confidence. It will be richly rewarded. Don't throw it away. Don't throw away God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Don't throw away God the Father, God the Son, and God the Son. Don't throw away the one who says, "I will never leave you. "I will never forsake you. "I am always with you." Don't throw it away. You will need perseverance and you will be richly rewarded.

And then in chapter 11, which has sometimes been called the faith chapter in the Bible, I'm not so sure about that, he lists a number of people who had faith. He lists a variety of other people, Abraham and so forth, and it says all these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised. They only saw them at a distance. And that they admitted that we really are strangers in this world because one day we will all be together. Talks about Moses, talks about Joseph, talks about all kinds of other people and what they had to endure. And I won't really read some of these things because it was just too difficult to grasp, but some Christians had to put up with and how they had to go through with it all. It was terrible.

But in chapter 12, and I'm almost done, it says this after everything else, "Therefore, since we are surrounded," I love this if you can picture it with me, "since we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses." There's more people here than here. We are surrounded. We've always been surrounded. We're surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. See, even some of those Old Testament prophets, New Testament writers, John, James, Peter, Old Testament prophets, we're part of them. We're part of that relationship. And all of them is to worship the perfecter of our faith who is Jesus Christ himself.

And so we keep learning, we keep giving ourselves. And then here's what he says toward the end. "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God." Someone says, "Well, no, I'm right here. I'm not there." Jesus says, "This is where you're coming." This is where you're coming. You have come. This is where God lives. This is where we'll live. But you have come to Mount Zion. You have come to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come, listen to this, you have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyfully assembly to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God. Here it is. We just sometimes forget the wonderful promise of God. You have come to God. You have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant sprinkled in the blood.

So how do you finish a book like this that's just so profound, different, completely different than any other of the book? Well, he tries to sum it up, but he says this, "Remember what Jesus said. Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can people do to me?"

Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you, consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same today, yesterday, and forever. Amen.

Closing

With thanks to those who led us, Adam, Rhonda, Dianne, and Don, and to you for the privilege of your time and participation this morning. As we go through the week, I leave you with a thought that could be our prayer. May this never grow old, and may our prayers be His will. The very end of Hebrews 13.

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will. And may He work in us what is pleasing to Him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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