

## Boldness

Last week we considered that Jesus is worthy. His value is beyond our ability to calculate. At times, it is beyond our ability to comprehend. When we think about the nature of God the father, God the son, and God the holy spirit; we are in awe. This reverence for God is inculcated in the Mosaic Law and throughout the scriptures. The word fear is used approximately 300 times in reference to God. Most often, the word may be translated as hold in reverence rather than to be in terror of God.

In the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible, the actual name for God was not written with any vowels so that people would not become comfortable speaking God's name. The combination of YHWH is often translated as Yahweh or Jehovah. The idea of respect for God and the reverence to be shown are clearly found in His word.

Many of us may have grown up with the caution that we should not even use the slang expression "Gee" because it was an implied use of God's name and thus a vain expression in which we were using God's name in vain. The world is a different place today. Far too many people would be silenced if the colloquial expressions "O, God", "O, my God", or OMG, were removed from their vocabulary. It is not my intention to debate these extremes. For me, there is no debate that we are to hold God in reverence. Yet, that does not mean that God is unapproachable.

The writer of Hebrews builds the case for Jesus to a predominantly Jewish reader. Part of the argument is that Jesus removed any and all barriers between us and God. Jesus is the only mediator through whom we may approach God. Jesus tells us this in His own words as we find in John 14:6.

**Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. (John 14:6 NASB)**

Later, Peter and John were brought to the Sanhedrin and asked by whose authority were they were healing the sick and preaching about Jesus. Peter's answer is found in Acts 4:12 where he says: **And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12 NASB)**

In the book of Hebrews, as we read last week, God speaks to us through Jesus. When we turn to the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, we see in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse the image of a sword.

**For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12 NASB)**

We just read the "word of God" and we need to pause to reflect on what is the word of God.

In John's gospel, we are introduced to the word of God and who or what is that word.

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

(Then dropping down to the 14<sup>th</sup> verse)

**And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1 & 14 NASB)**

John suggests that Jesus is that sword. This aligns with the next phrase in our reading from Hebrews where we are told that sword is **living and active**. God's word is dynamic. In its written form, the Bible, it has the ability to do things in the life of those who hear.

Like a sword, it can and does penetrate into our innermost being. There are no hidden things from God. Our thoughts and our actions are known to God. We cannot conceal anything from God. His word penetrates into every part of our being, both spiritual and physical. God's word judges our thoughts as weighed against His standard. It is a just weight and it is true. It is interesting to note that in Ephesians, part of the armor of God is the sword. Once again, the sword is called the word of God.

**And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17 NASB)**

As we return to our scripture in Hebrews, we see that the living and active sword of God pierces into our innermost being thus we can hide nothing.

**And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4:13 NASB)**

So, nothing is hidden from Him. Everything is laid bare to His eyes. Knowing this, we are reminded that we have some sort of relationship with Him. In the translation we just read, it says **with whom we have to do**. This is the same wording that we find in the KJV. In the NKJV and the NIV, we find **to whom we must give account**. That wording is in agreement with the actual literal translation from the Greek. Thus, we understand that this person before whom we are laid bare is someone to whom we are accountable.

We spend a lot of time talking about being saved by grace and not by works. We don't spend much time talking about the coming judgement when we all will stand before the judge and give an account. One of those verses that should give each of us pause to reflect is found in Matthew the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter. Jesus has talked about the words we speak show our defilement. In His conversation, He tells us **But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. (Matthew 12:36 NASB)**

Here, in this section of Hebrews, we learn that this Jesus, who sees us uncovered, will be there awaiting our turn to give an account for everything. There is nothing hidden or secret. This is a sobering thought.

Therefore, knowing what we just read and knowing what we just discussed, how do we react? **Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (Hebrews 4:14 NASB)**

Our confidence rests on Jesus. He is a **great high priest**, a title that suggests his superiority to the Levitical priests. He has **passed through the heavens**. The Jewish tradition suggest various levels of heaven. We may remember that Paul made reference to the third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:2. Here we just read that our high priest **has passed through the heavens**. Jesus has gone right through to the supreme place. His greatness is further emphasized by the title **Son of God**. All this is the basis for an exhortation to hold firmly to our profession.

Our high priest fully understands what we face and what we feel. Jesus became human and lived for thirty-three years on earth as a human. Because of this, He can and does understand our temptations and weaknesses.

**For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15 NASB)**

Our High Priest has entered into our weakness. He became human, just like we are. Therefore, He can sympathize meaningfully with us. He "has been tempted . . . just as we are". Jesus knows first-hand the full force of temptation. He knows the enticements we face and the difficulties we

deal with when facing those temptations. The difference between Jesus and us is that Jesus did not sin.

It should not be inferred that living a sinless life was easy for Jesus. The main reason for Jesus to become human was so He could know the temptations and not sin. Only in this way could His sinlessness be earned. Without Jesus paying the price of facing temptation and being sinless, Jesus could not gain the victory over sin on our behalf. What does this mean for us?

**Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16 NASB)**

Because we have a high priest who knows and has experienced the same temptations that we face without sin, we have confidence. This allows us to approach the throne of grace with boldness.

Here, in this verse we find two words which bear defining. Those words are grace and mercy. I have heard grace, mercy and justice summed up in these words.

***Justice is getting what we deserve. Mercy is not getting what we deserve and grace is getting what we don't deserve.***

When we sin, we fall under the penalty of the Law. In Romans, we find **the wages of sin is death**. That is justice. Jesus, through His sinlessness, paid that penalty. We may approach God's throne of grace. We come to God to receive the favors of God which we don't deserve. At the same time, we do not get the punishment which we do deserve. That is mercy. One of the most pitiful things that I have seen is when I ask someone if they are saved or if they are going to heaven and they reply "I hope so." That is the answer of a timid and uncertain person. What we have seen this morning is that because of Jesus, we can be sure. We can with boldness approach God's throne of grace. Our boldness is not of our earned merit but through Jesus our high priest who earned that right for us.

Christians should not be timid because we have the great High Priest in whom we can be confident. His successful traverse of the heavens points to His power to help. He has felt the same things we feel. So, He knows our weakness and can have sympathy with our needs. In the light of this, what can hold us back?