

## HEBREWS 4

### Our Sympathetic High Priest

Today we want to ask two questions, but we'll only answer one today. The second we'll look at next week.

#### Q#1 What does God want from me/ US?

I'll bet you have thought about that at times. Perhaps it has kept you up at night, or woke you up early in the morning. Perhaps you've cried out, "God what do you WANT FROM ME?" YOU may be there right now.

#### Q#2 What does God want to give me/US?

This may not be a question you've asked as much. It seems too self-centered, right? The Christian life is all about self-denial, right? The perspective we might have is that "God has done so much for me in Christ, it wouldn't be right to expect anything else from Him." Perhaps you thought the answer to that question is, "A 2x4 upside the head".

Friends, I have some good news for you today as we consider both of those questions. Let's read the text from Heb 4 – READ ALOUD CORPORATELY

14 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.

15 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.

16 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.

#### Q#1 What does God want from me/ US?

HOLD FAST OUR CONFESSION  
COME TO HIM IN TIME OF NEED

v.14 therefore – because we are laid bare and vulnerable, we need a high priest. We need someone to give us safe access to God and we have Him – Jesus.

13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

In one of the early sermons of this series I indicated that Hebrews is like a big "LET US SALAD." Today we see two heads of "let us".

#### Q#1 What does God want from me/ US?

1. Let Us Hold fast our confession

"let us hold fast" = Gr.= vigor, power, retain

\*\* - MEN LISTEN UP – following Christ is for the strong, not the weak. It takes vigor. This will be the toughest challenge you will ever face because it is 24/7 – 365 and the need to hold fast our confession (i.e. life of repentant faith) will come at us from any direction.

GOOD NEWS – WE ARE NOT ALONE – This is what God asks of us, but He doesn't leave us without help. We have Christ and we have each other.

Given all that Jesus is for us, we can hold fast.

He is the great High Priest to represent us before God.

He didn't just pass through the holy of holies, he passed through the heavens to the throne of God.

He's not just a high priest, but also the Son of God.

There are perks that come with being the friend of the son of the boss. He is our advocate before the Father.

As a pastor, teacher, fire firefighter, assembly worker, self-employed business owner, homeschooler, student, retired person, etc. **our TOP PRIORITY each day is to wake up and BELIEVE the gospel – Hold fast to our confession. That is job ONE.**

The world is toxic to a life of faith, so hold fast. Persevering is not an easy thing. Waiting on God is not an easy thing. Ps 27

Depend on Christ who has opened the way to the throne of grace.

What are you doing to keep yourself in environment of others who are seeking to “hold fast” to our confession?

‘LET US’. **Holding fast is a corporate activity.**

\*\* LET US get very practical...Why do we have church, Sunday School, community groups, bible studies, VBS, etc? (I’m going from preaching to meddling, not to lay a guilt trip on anyone, but to offer an invitation)

Do we do it because we want to load you down with things to do and keep you from going off and spending quality time alone with God? NO

EX: TRUE STORY .....I’ve been a pastor for 33 years and I’ve never had someone say, “The reason I don’t go to CHURCH, Sunday School, community group, men’s or women’s group, for example, is because I find that I make better use of that hour by reading and praying on my own.”

NEVER HEARD IT. Maybe the people who do that are too humble to admit it, but I seriously doubt that is what is going on. And IF people actually did that, they might, in some way, find it personally edifying, BUT...

Here’s the flip side to consider in light of v.14. If that is what people are doing, great for them INDIVIDUALLY, but that is not a “let US hold fast” approach to the Christian life. That is a “let ME hold fast” approach.

**Unless you are alone on a deserted island, you are not holding fast to Christ and the confession unless you are doing it in the context of community.**

There is a personal “holding fast”, but it is NOT private “holding fast”. And honestly, once a week in worship is good, but it has its limitations in terms of the “let US” obligations of the Christian life. There are lots of opportunities during the week for “Christ and Me” time, but the “Christ and US” time is limited, so why not take advantage of them while we can?

***“Well, I’m just one person. It doesn’t matter if I’m not there.”*** NOT SO.

If you have 2 or more kids you know how much the dynamic changes when just one child is away. One person brings out different aspects of other people

EX: CS Lewis and Four Loves - three close friends, one died. Lewis and Tolkein were left but Lewis missed the part of Tolkein that the third man (Charles) brought out. Instead of having more of JRR, he has less.

**"In each friend there is something that only another can bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole person into activity. I need other lights than my own to show up all his facets. We possess each friend, not less but more, as the number of those with whom we share him increases."**

One (1) person adds more than just one dynamic to a group. Each single person brings out something in every other person that only he/she can.

Why do we have church, Sunday School, community groups, bible studies, etc?  
Because they are environments where we learn about God and His grace toward us in Christ, so that WE might HOLD FAST. **There is only so much that we can do, or will do, on our own.**

Practically speaking, here at Highlands we try to make it as easy as possible to benefit from various opportunities on Sunday morning and Sunday night. Why? Because we know that the mindset of the world is toxic. the week gets hectic and it is hard to set aside the time to get together with others. So, we build some LET US time into the structure of our ministry.

We seek to create some low hanging fruit when it comes to opportunities for connecting, learning, and serving because those are ways that we can encourage one another to hold fast to our confession. GUT CHECK TIME: Are you going for the low hanging fruit? If not, why not? I may be wrong here, but based on 30+ years of doing this, I'd bet the farm that if a believer isn't picking the low hanging fruit, then he/she isn't going for the fruit that is harder to reach. **If we ignore the LET US opportunities then it is harder to "hold fast our confession."**

**Are you a "LET US" Christian OR A "LET ME" Christian?**

The foundation of our confession is Jesus, our High Priest, who can sympathize with us.

Jesus gets us into the presence of God. Through Him we get God's ear.

EX: Wizard of Oz – they had to earn their way to the great and powerful Oz.

The Good news is that Jesus has done it for us, and he is our anchor beyond the veil. Heb 6:19-20

**"Let us Love and Sing and Wonder"**- each verse ends with a reference to how Jesus brings us to God.

**v. 1 ends...**

**He has washed us with His blood**

**He has brought us nigh to God**

**v. 2...He has washed us with His blood**

**He presents our souls to God**

**v. 3 He, Who washed us with His blood,**

**Soon will bring us home to God**

**v.4...He Who washed us with His blood**

**Has secured our way to God**

**V5...Thou hast washed us with Thy blood**

**Thou art worthy Lamb of God**

He understands us and is sympathetic towards us.

EX: two pianos – sympathetic resonance.

**Jesus, who took on human nature, has a sympathetic resonance with us.**

Sympathy says, "I feel bad **for** you";

Empathy says, "I feel bad **with** you; I know what you are going through; I've gone through it myself"

He understands what it is like to inhabit a body of flesh, to be tired, to be hungry and to face the full onslaught of the temptation of Satan.

EX: We struggle with things that others don't struggle with and we know that they can never really sympathize with us. This is a small example, but I've known some men for over 30 years and during that time I don't think their body shape has changed AT ALL during the years (I hates them).

Maybe every day is a battle for them with staying in shape, but I doubt it. They can pity me, but not really empathize with me.

How does God feel or respond when we sin?? ( angry, disappointed, judging??)

As Psalm 103:14 says *For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.*

We need to PUT ON THOSE LENSES

*Rom 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Instead our High Priest has sympathy and empathy for us.

When we remember that He sympathizes with us, we don't need to LIVE IN GUILT, CONDEMNATION, AND SHAME anymore.

We may feel Godly sorrow/ remorse for hurting others or ourselves, but we need not live with a cloud of guilt floating over us. (that's another sermon).

**Q#1 What does God want from me/ US? #2**

**The SECOND thing God wants from me/US is that we would come to the Throne of Grace with confidence (boldly).**

v. 16 – “let us come boldly” – confidently, honestly, bluntly, frankness

EX: “Can we talk?” à la JOAN Rivers

God invites us to come before His throne of grace to speak frankly and honestly with Him i.e. boldly

EX: Jesus praying in the Garden- bold, honest

Remember that it's NOT the throne of guilt and shame, but the throne of grace which means that we can be honest with God about our sin, our fears, our doubts, our joys.

**Remember that we are open and laid bare before His eyes, so there's nothing we can hide, nor do we need to.**

What do we have to gain??? MERCY AND GRACE – (NEXT WEEK)

The only reason that I don't want mercy and grace is because it means that I must admit that I'm a bigger sinner than I really want to believe. I must admit that there are deeper heart issues than I want to recognize.

**A personal realization several years ago... “I'M ALLERGIC TO GRACE”**

**GOING TO THE THRONE OF GRACE SHOULD BE OUR FIRST RESPONSE, NOT OUR LAST RESPONSE.**

Our sympathetic High Priest has given us access to the throne of grace. We're crazy not to rush in.

I'll close with this today, and probably lead with it next week.

It comes from VoV –

**THE DARK GUEST**

**There is no treasure so wonderful**

**As that continuous experience of Thy grace**

**Toward me which ALONE can subdue**

**The risings of sin within:**

**GIVE ME MORE OF IT.**

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