

We still find ourselves in Hebrews.

This is a sermon being preached to a group of people that we don't know much about. They may be experiencing persecution. But they are for sure weary and losing hope.

But we do know they are weary. They are losing hope in this venture that they committed to. They've lost a lot! They're wondering: is God trustworthy? Reliable? Will these promises we've put our hope in to come true?

We experience this too from time to time.

When we look around the world right now, it's easy to feel weary, to lose hope. Not sure what to put our trust in. We ask too: in the face of all the death, the war, the tragedies, the continued racism, the continued violence of our world: is God trustworthy?

Hope can be hard to hold on to from time to time.

Take comfort in the reality you're not the first to know this reality....

The author of this sermon wants to encourage and give the people some hand holds to hold on to. A few places to rest in. A few assurances to put roots in.

And so in chapter 6 the author says this statement:

¹⁹ We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰ where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

(Jesus has gone behind the veil).

The holy of holies, which was the place in the back of the temple where God's presence rested...was covered in a large curtain.

Priests went behind it To make offerings. To intercede. To bring before God the people.

And here. We learn: Jesus has gone behind the veil, which is a picture trying to tell us:

we have a secure, permanent connection to God's literal presence through Jesus. It's not something we can mess up, it's not something we have to work to get, it's not something that can be interrupted.

God has drawn near us in love.

This whole high priest thing is a bit confusing.

So maybe some modern-day metaphors would be like this:

The baby has direct access to nutrients through the umbilical cord.
direct access uninterrupted.

Or maybe it's like a modem that works well—internet direct
access uninterrupted.

Or. I spent a few years living in a place where we had to haul water
in order to have access to it. Sometimes the cistern would run dry.
Our access to water was not direct and it was not secure. The day I
rented from someone in a city who also paid the water bills....this
direct, uninterrupted was a life changer.

And the author says.

it's done. It's finished. Nothing can cause that direct access to be cut off.
We have it forever. We have it always. We have it without the interference
of anyone other than Jesus. We are connected to God. Once and forever.
Everything is already done.

It's kind of a Romans 8 moment: nothing in all creation can separate us
from the love of God. God has drawn near to us in Jesus.

The preacher wants to make clear a few things about this:

The first: we cannot mess it up.

“The bad news about the old covenant is that the people broke faith and
violated their promises. The first covenant was not an equal affair—God
was God, and the people were people—but it was, nonetheless, a two-way
arrangement. If the people would hold on firmly to their end of the rope,
then God promised to hold on to the other and to pull them to a place of
safety and rest. The people vowed that they would, indeed, hold on, but
they quickly grew weary and let go. They swore obedience, but, like all
human beings, they wavered, buckled, and finally fell (see 3:7–19). No law
could make them obey; no ox blood could strengthen their resolve.¹

The good news, however, is that God didn't let go....God wanted to
be in relationship. Wanted to give us mercy and grace in abundance.
So much, that they decided at the beginning of all time to give
themselves to that task. And here in Jesus, God gives up himself.
Gives up his own life so we can know God...Once and for all.
Everything is finished.

Jewish mindset was so deeply focused on purity and correctness of worship
in a super technical and often difficult to follow way, but in Jesus, we have
a better covenant, one that doesn't rely on our ability to get it right all the

¹ Long, T. G. (1997). [Hebrews](#) (p. 91). Louisville, KY: John Knox Press.

time. The cycle of defeat and despair is broken. Jesus can save us completely. We cannot mess it up.

And so you will find. No history, no background, no sin, no struggle, no moment in history, no self rejection, no falling back into temptation again can separate us from God's presence and love.

Which is good news for us because we too have questions:

Am I doing this right? Am I doing enough? Is the approval I've gained in the community somehow make God like me more? Have I sinned too big? Have I repented enough?

In one of Mary Oliver's poems there's a line:

"You Don't need to walk on your knees.

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees

for a hundred miles through the desert repenting."

Her poem goes on. But God loves us so much that this was made in such a way it cannot fail. It cannot. It's guaranteed. We cannot mess it up. Because it's all about Jesus. And Jesus has done all that is necessary. We're forever tapped into the water source.

The preacher wants to make clear a few things about this:

The first: we cannot mess it up.

The second: no more sacrifices are required.

No more sacrifices are necessary for forgiveness, for grace and mercy to flow from the throne room of God.

As Chad explained last week, sacrifices pointed us toward God but didn't bring us the transformation we were looking for.

It seems that the Jewish mindset at times was focused not only on purity but also on worship rituals in a very confusing and hard to follow way.

Slaughter this animal for this, celebrate this feast, don't come to worship if this has happened.

But in Jesus, once and for all, everything is finished.

Meaning. God's presence and love is not accessed by doing customs, rituals and sacrifices.

It relies only on Jesus.

This is good news for us....God's presence and love are not accessed by going to church, singing songs, standing on your head while wiggling your

toes, by silence or confession or by communion. It's not based on how many volunteer hours you commit or how well dressed you used to show up for church.

The church is secure in the priesthood of Christ, whether we are able to gather together or not. We still have access to the living presence of Christ which can be found everywhere.

It's true...these rituals, these ways of worshipping, coming together can indeed be helpful...we know many of you have been missing them.

Because they can create space for us to meet with God—like the way a host creates space for us to meet with their family.

These ways of worshipping can form us...like practicing your golf swing on the driving range can form you for a game.

They can help us see what God is really like and who we are—so we can spot it in daily life—the way you know what a triangle looks like and you can see it everywhere you look.

They can ground and support us in a community all walking in the same direction—like how it's easier to run faster and with better form when you're running with others.

These rituals, these religious ceremonies, these practices are and can be helpful. But they are not the point. They do not give us access to God's love or presence. Only Jesus does.

Perhaps you've noticed even without the forms of worship we've become reliant on throughout the years, God still is here. Showing up

The church is secure because of the priesthood of Jesus. Even without all the We are secure in the priesthood of Jesus.

The presence of God is available to us everywhere, every day. We're tapped into the water source securely and permanently.

The preacher wants to make clear a few things about this:

The first: we cannot mess it up.

The second: no more sacrifices are required.

The third: this access is guaranteed and secure.

This covenant, this access to God, no longer relies on human priests who die, who need to be changed over from time to time, who might be corrupt or too full of their own sin to offer what is needed to get rid of ours.

But this high priest: Jesus. Is holy, blameless, set apart, perfect. Which is hard to grasp, but simply means this high priest will never change. He lives forever to intercede through all the ages for anyone who draws near to God.

There is no more insecurity, no more questions about if we'll be able to access God. Jesus has already died and is risen and is sitting in the heavenly realm....the God realm ready always and forever to bring us access to God.

Access to God doesn't rely on anyone but Jesus.

This is good news for us....

Access to God doesn't go through a pastor, a community accepting you, the elders or deacons. God is accessed not through your mom or dad's approval. Not through anyone but Jesus.

There's a line in the liturgy when we do communion sometimes where I've said: it is not I who welcome you here, but Christ. So come! You who have much faith and you who have little.

We do not get to draw the lines of who is in and who is out, and other people cannot draw those lines for us.

We do not grant people access to Jesus, to God's presence, love and mercy, only Jesus does.

We do not control the flow of God's grace and mercy to one another, Christ's life and spirit's transformation. It is Jesus who welcomes you and gives you access to God.

the point the preacher is trying to make clear.

Jesus connects us to the Father in a way that is lasting and perfect, that we don't have to worry that our muddling attempts to worship, to pray, to be transformed, will be insufficient.

We are connected with God. All is already done. God's promise is true. All there's left to do is to rest in that reality. Become awake and aware that we are already connected to the flow of love, mercy, grace, divine presence. Everyday. For this, the author says, is where our hope lies.....

¹⁹ We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰ where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever.

The thing about anchors is that they keep boats steady in good ocean weather, when tides go in and out, when storms beat and batter them-the anchor keeps them steady.

And so what is most important to realize is this:

Our hope in the great high priest does not make life easier, or less difficult, it doesn't promise all will be well in a few months, it doesn't mean there will not be hardship or suffering. That people will not sin against you. It does not mean we will get all our desires fulfilled or our lives filled with health, wealth or happiness.

Instead, our hope allows us to be durable, resilient, steady even in the midst of all of the difficulty of our world, of our lives, the struggles and tensions of the way of Christ.

A hope that is durable. Can be buffeted and remains secure.
A hope that can put pants on. Can go out and face the hard things courageously and work for church.
A hope that allows us to rest. And trust that the transformation of us and our world will happen because God loves us that much.

Why? Because it anchors us in who we really are: beloved children of God. And identity and a love nothing can mess up: not your sin, your muddling attempts at worship, the acceptance or rejection of anyone else.

So today: the question I leave you with is this:

How does this reality give you comfort and hope?
What practices allow you to be awake to this reality even as "the old order of things" has vanished during COVID?
How has hope kept you grounded, working for God's kingdom, transformed you, made you resilient?

Because sometimes it's truly very difficult to see this as hope and to know we belong to God already. That we have a water source fully connected.

May you know God's presence and love, the way God has drawn near to us. And may you rest in the secureness of that love.