

Sermon 7 Feb 2021

Good Day All,

We have received the permission from the Bishop and the Synod Covid Committee that we may resume with services again as from the 21 February 2021. I hope to see you there.

A Merciful High Priest **Reading Hebrew 2 :14-18**

What does Jesus do for us? That is not a simple question. In fact it takes the whole Bible to answer that question. The book of the Hebrews was written to explain why we should remain faithful to the Lord and what He accomplished for us.

Hebrews 1 begins to explain the supremacy of Christ and Hebrews 2 opens with several warnings to not fall away but rather to continue in faith.

There is no questions that Christians are under attack. Look at China how Christian are being persecuted. Bibles are being burnt, buildings are being burned down. The Europe Dignity Watch has evidence of more than 200 cases of intolerance or discrimination against Christians since 2006 for an example a Christian midwife in Sweden who was not allowed to work there because she would not participate in abortions.

Those attacks are not the greatest source of danger. We have an external enemy, Satan, and an internal enemy, our own sinful nature. Theses are more threatening than any persecution.

Our Eternal Enemy – Satan.

Satan is our enemy. He is a real person, He is a fallen angel, the inventor of sin and rebellion. He is a liar, a rebel and a murderer. He is the accuser, the destroyer. He is God's adversary and the adversary of all God's people. He is vile, worthless and wicked. He is constantly on the prowl looking for someone who is vulnerable to attack. He is a deceiver who has persuaded people to remain in their sins and motivates them them to hate and attack those who are serving God.

Satan has always had an intensive effort to snatch Christians out of Christ's hand. He is the first one on the scene when the word of God is preached fighting to keep people in their sin.

By Jesus' death He emptied Satan's power against us. He rendered Satan powerless and freed those who had been enslaved by the fear of death.

Simply by raising the dead does not cancel out the fear of death. Jesus raised Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow of Nain but they all died again.

Instead Jesus defeated Satan by dying on the cross. Submitting himself to death when death had no hold over Him. Jesus was born without any sin and never sinned in His life and so death had no power over Him. In fact, death was so powerless over Jesus that it could not take Him even when He was crucified on the cross. Jesus had to yield up His own Spirit and allow death to hold on to Him for a short time. When it was time to take up His life again, death was powerless to stop Him.

Jesus' resurrection was the defeat of death itself. Death could not hold Him, but had to give Him up when He chose. By His death we are reconciled with God. We are declared righteous who took our sinfulness upon Himself. We are sanctified and cleansed of all unrighteousness. We are adopted into the family of God.

Satan still bites and snarls at us like a roaring lion, threatening us with death, reminding us of our sins and the judgement of God. But Jesus says in John “ I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.”

Do you believe this? Do you have this hope, that the Lord Jesus Christ took on flesh and blood and surrendered Himself to death and then was raised from death to life and that He will raise you from the dead if you have faith in Him. If you believe this, then what power could Satan have over you. Our external enemy has been defeated.

Our Internal Enemy – Sin.

Even though Satan has been defeated by the death of Jesus on the cross, he still has some thing up his sleeve and that is to lead people into temptation.

He continues to tempt us to sin. Successful temptations are not sudden and violent, but subtle, slow and undetectable. Satan didn't approach Eve in the garden and say, “why don't you sin against God so He will kill you.” No he gently coaxed her along till she fell for the temptation to eat of the forbidden fruit.

James 1:14-15 says, “But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desires, he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

Temptation sends down roots into our minds and our hearts and when those roots are established, it eventually grows into sin and death.

Hebrews 2:18 says that Jesus comes to help all those who being tempted. How does He do that? Hebrews 2:17 says, “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers

in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service of God, and that he might make atonement (propitiation) for the sins of the people.”

Jesus is a merciful and faithful high priest in pertaining to God. He didn't give His life, and rise from the dead to make us popular, or solve our financial difficulties, or give us a good life.

Social justice has become a frequent topic. Jesus did not come to change earthly systems. Someone in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” But he said to the man, “Man, who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you.”

Jesus came to become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to solve our real problem- God's anger. He made atonement (propitiation) for the sins of the world. He satisfied God's anger against sinners.

People often say “I forgive you” or something like that. But atonement is not simply God saying, “Well, you hurt My feelings, I was angry but I forgive you” Atonement means that God's righteousness and wrath against us has been completely satisfied. Sin doesn't hurt God's feelings, it violates His holiness.

Some people think that sin is no more that a walk in the park. Sin is an attack on the very nature of God. God's judgement against sin is right and is deserved.

Atonement means God's righteous judgement against our sin has been paid for. The forgiveness of Jesus is not God ignoring our sin, but accepting that a just penalty has been paid for us, wiping our slate clean, clearing our debt, changing our identity from sinner to beloved child.

Jesus comes to our aid when we are tempted. He and the Holy Spirit warns us about sin in the scriptures. He comes to help us when temptation comes and we give in to it. Hebrews 2:18 says, “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

In Romans we read, “If God is for us who is against us?” Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword. In all these things we are overwhelmingly conquerors through Him who love us.

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, neither angels, nor demons, neither the present, nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38,39

Amen

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