

Text: Hebrews 10:10:19-25

*“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith....”*

Technology has really changed the way we communicate with others. In some ways, it has opened up possibilities that didn't exist ten or twenty years ago. There was a time when it was difficult to stay connected with someone, if they moved away to another city or another state. Sure, you could write letters, but that takes time. The envelope has to travel hundreds of miles, just to make it to the other person. That takes days, or even weeks, depending on where they live, which makes it kind of tough to have an actual conversation. But today, you can stay in touch with friends and families, no matter where they are. You just pick up a tablet, and connect with them on Skype, and you can not only hear their voice but can see each other face to face. It almost feels like the other person is right there, sitting in the room with you. Every once in a while we let the kids Skype with Grandma Julie and Grampa Phil. We take turns passing the tablet around, and saying hello. If we are at the dinner table, we just prop the tablet up on its stand, and it's like they're in the chair next to you. The best part is, it's free! But as wonderful as Skype might be, it does have its limitations: it is kind of hard to reach through the screen to hug the person on the other side. It isn't the same as being there in person.

The book of Hebrews tells us that we are able to approach God in a way that wasn't possible in the OT. The author of the letter reflects back on the history of Israel, at a time when the tabernacle was at the center of their worship. This was where God met with His people. It represented the presence of God dwelling among them. There was no doubt that this was sacred ground. But as near as the Lord might have been, there was always a sense in which the people were still far away. They could only draw so close as they offered Him their praise. There was a line that could not be crossed, and a barrier that could not be traversed, which prevented them from enjoying unhindered access. Sin makes it impossible for human beings to enter the presence of the Holy God. But these verses, in Hebrews 10, show us how Christ's death and resurrection changed everything, making it possible for us to connect with God in a much deeper and intimate way than ever before.

He became a better high priest, and offered a better sacrifice, opening the way into a relationship with God the Father.

And so we don't have to stand on the outside, anymore, wondering what it would be like to have fellowship with God. We don't have to feel out of place, when we walk through the doors of the church. We don't have to be afraid of what God thinks when He sees us. We can enter in with confidence and full assurance. The Lord invites you to stand in His presence and praise His name.

**We are able to draw near in worship because a better high priest has come.**

In the OT, the priests played a key role in Israel's worship. They served in the temple, and performed all of the rituals and ceremonies prescribed by the Law, but they also did more than that. Priests were mediators between God and His people. Their responsibility, in one sense, was to stand in between between sinful human beings and the Holy God, making it possible for the two sides to connect. Of course, they were very limited in that role, because they were really just ordinary people themselves, with the same problems as weaknesses as anyone else. A plain, ordinary human being cannot really hope to establish peace between God and men. But what if God entered our realm and became a mortal man, like us? That would put Him in a perfect position to bring us together with God. The passage shows us that this is exactly what God has done.

Verse 21 says, "...since we have a great high priest, over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith..." Who is this great high priest, who ministers on our behalf before God? --Jesus, the Son of God -- Because of Him, and what He has done, we are welcomed into the household of God, becoming sons and daughters of the Almighty. Christ has done more than stand in the middle between God and man, He leads us into the presence of our Heavenly Father.

Imagine you're on vacation, visiting friends, out of town. On Sunday morning you decided to go with your friends to their church. You've never been there before, and don't know anyone else (other than your friends). Even if you're an outgoing person, it can be a little intimidating to find yourself in an unfamiliar place filled with complete strangers. Where do we hang our coat? Where do we sit? How can we put names with all of these faces? But it makes it so much easier having your friend right beside you to show you the way. They introduce you to lots of people, and they are all so welcoming. Before you know it you don't feel strange or out of place any more. Because of your friend, you are able to feel right at home.

Christ brings us into the household of God, and as our Great High priest He introduces us to the Father. And so we no longer need to feel like a stranger or an outsider anymore. There is no longer any need for a human mediator to stand in between us. Because we know the Son, we have immediate access to the Father.

## **We are able to draw near in worship because a better sacrifice has been offered.**

Verse 19 tells us that "*we have confidence to enter the Holy Place through the blood of Jesus.*" In the OT, the people of Israel were required to bring a sacrifice to the tabernacle, where the priests would slaughter the animal and present it before God as a burnt offering. The blood was sprinkled on the altar as a symbol for cleansing from sin. The whole sacrificial system sounds pretty awful, and it should. But it was a powerful demonstration of the seriousness of sin. Scripture tells us that the wages of sin is death. Every member of the human race has rebelled against God, and broken His righteous commands, and that is the fate we deserve. But God is gracious, and has provided another way. The sacrifices brought by the children of Israel were an object lesson: one life was given in exchange for another. The innocent died so the guilty could be set free.

It's not that those sacrifices were really adequate to make people right with God. Elsewhere, in Hebrews, we are told that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. These sacrifices were merely a token payment, or a symbol representing something better that was to come. It was sort of like an IOU. Imagine you're at work, one day, and you decide to order lunch. The delivery guy comes, but you realize that you've left your wallet at home and have no way to pay the man. You're feeling pretty embarrassed, but come up with a solution. What if I give you an IOU? I will write the amount I owe you on this slip of paper, and you come back tomorrow when I have my wallet, so I can pay you. There is no value in the IOU, it's just a piece of paper, but the promise that it represents carries value. That slip of paper isn't cash, but he's going to trade it in the next time he sees you for real money.

These sacrifices were a symbol of God's promise to pay the debt we owe. They looked ahead, and pointed to a better sacrifice, that would have the power to cleanse humanity from sin. That would have to be a pretty amazing sacrifice, and it was. Hebrews 9:14 says, "*how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.*"

He made a better sacrifice, offering Himself, His own life, in exchange for ours. The innocent died so that the guilty could be set free. There is no one else in the whole world who could do that for us, no one else would be qualified, but Jesus is the pure and spotless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That means we don't need to carry around a guilty conscience for our failures and mistakes, anymore. If you have received Christ as Savior, your heart has been sprinkled clean with His blood, your sins are forgiven, and now we are prepared to serve God with our lives.

### **We are able to draw near to God in worship because a better entrance has been opened.**

Verses 19-20 tell us that "*...we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh.*"

When I say "a better entrance," that is not really accurate because there wasn't really an entrance into the presence of God, in the OT, at least not one the people could access. There was a veil that served as a barrier, blocking the way into a place called the Holy of Holies. In the tabernacle there were essentially two rooms: the first room is where the priests carried out their duties (keeping the menorah lit, and offering incense...). The second room is where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, and it was where the glory of God revealed in a special way. When the Israelites camped in the desert, God's glory appeared as a pillar of cloud or fire in and above the Holy of Holies. There was a massive curtain that stood in between these two rooms, covering the entrance. Only the priests were allowed to enter the tabernacle, but not even the priests were permitted to go beyond the curtain into the Most Holy Place. There was only one exception: on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest offered the sacrifice for the sins of the nation, he would enter in to sprinkle blood. He did so with much fear and trepidation, realizing that he was treading on sacred ground.

The curtain was a reminder that sinful man is unable to stand in the presence of the Holy God. But an amazing thing happened, the moment Jesus died on the cross. Scripture tells us that the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. Just as his flesh was torn by the flogging of the soldiers and the nails that pierced his feet and hands, the curtain in the temple was torn demonstrating that the way has been opened and barrier has been removed. All who enter in, through Christ, are welcome to come and find fellowship with God. He is still holy. That will never change. But Christ has dealt with our sin, allowing us unprecedented access to the Father.

You may carry around a lot of keys, that open doors: home, car, work, church... The most important key is the one that opens the door for us to enter a relationship with God. What is the key? Jesus Christ. John 14:6 He says, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me."* He opened the way, through His death and resurrection. All that is left is for us to walk through. That's called faith, placing our trust in Jesus Christ and accepting Him as our Lord and Savior.

### **Conclusion -**

Our passage this morning shows us that we are able to draw near to God, entering His presence. When we gather together on Sunday mornings, God isn't standing far away listening to our praise. He is right here, in our midst. And all through the week, as you pray, and spend time in His Word, He isn't standing far away. He is right there, in your heart.

We have become the temple of the living the God, and His Holy Spirit dwells in us. Don't take this privilege for granted. Realize how amazing it is to be invited into the most holy place, to stand before the Lord, and experience fellowship with Him. Remember what was required to make this possible.

It is not just the outskirts of His tabernacle, that we stand, but right before His throne. Let us draw near, as the passage urges, with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22).