

Ps 81; Je 2:4-13; He 13:1-8, 15-16; Lu 14:1. 7-14
God Provides Yesterday, Today and Forever

This week, we complete our brief survey of the Letter to the Hebrews. If you choose to attend adult Sunday school you may take a closer look at this NT Epistle, beginning Sunday Sept 8th at 9 a.m.

When the writer of Hebrews tells us “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever,” the full meaning is not immediately clear. We talked last week about the eternal, indestructible character of the throne of God. It cannot be shaken. Anchored in that truth is the holy, universe-changing work that Jesus has accomplished.

When God breathed all energy and matter into being, Jesus was part of that work. Jesus also was present when the Law was instituted at Mt Sinai on stone tablets. Then, when the tabernacle came into being, Jesus was the only begotten Son of God as much as ever – always the same. Thousands upon thousands of livestock were sacrificed on altars built by God’s people over

many centuries of time. Because “the life is in the blood,” (Gen 9:4-6; Lev 17:10-14; Dt 12:20-25) and the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood washes away sin; therefore, God rolled up His sleeves and sent Jesus into the world as a newborn human being to fulfill every need, past, present and future to cleanse from sin. It is the blood of Jesus that cleanses absolutely.

Our assigned text for today doesn’t include the part about the blood of the former animal sacrifice and the blood of Jesus making the New Covenant. Verses nine through fourteen are not part of the reading. What the preacher is telling us is that no ancient structure or institution remains. The Law is fulfilled outside old Jerusalem – outside the old Temple – outside the old cult of animal sacrifice. Our altar, our temple, our city are in Jesus Christ. The temple not made with hands is our dwelling place.

The people reading the Letter to the Hebrews back in the day had been waiting a long time for the promise of God to be fulfilled. Jesus had come, lived among the people, been crucified, buried, risen and ascended into the heavenly city.

And this community was enduring the suffering mentioned in verse three: torture and imprisonment. They are in danger of becoming cynical and unbelieving. They are tempted by the culture and the paganism around them. Aren't we in the same danger, church? We are not always well focused – to wait – to watch and pray for Jesus to return.

The old saying has been, “when the going gets tough, the tough get going.” But what Scripture is telling us today is, “when the going gets tough, Jesus-followers cling more closely to Him.” We are not called to be tough. We are called to “continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that confess His name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” (vv 15-16)

Today, we have instruction – guidance in how to be more like Jesus, not more like tough-minded people full of worldly wisdom.

Let's review what the preacher says:

Visit those in prison.

Care for those who have been tortured.

Keep the marriage bed pure.

No adultery, no fornication.

Claim Jesus as your own, believing He will never leave you or forsake you.

Remember the saints who have led you and imitate their way of life.

Praise God at all times.

Do good. Be generous.

One day, Jesus accepted an invitation to have dinner with a leader of the Pharisees. It was the Sabbath. We have before us the parable He told his host and the other religious leaders. But, before He told the story, he healed a man. Then, Jesus challenged the group about their silly rule that no healing work should be done on the Sabbath. This time they were silent.

Now He tells them the story that illustrates the kingdom principle of leveling. All who exalt themselves will be humbled by God. All who humble themselves will be exalted by God.

Furthermore, Jesus tells this learned and respected crowd, “put on a meal **not** for your equals, if you are so important. Rather, put on a

meal and invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. (All those who were most disadvantaged in those days – those without resources) Jesus says share your plenty with those who could never pay you back. This, says the Lord, is the path to reward and receiving the gift of Christ's resurrection glory."

See how Jesus lavishes heavenly treasure upon those who hate Him. They don't want His advice. They want to kill Him. They consider Him an enemy. Yet, He stands in their midst and offers the true food and drink – wisdom from The Holy One – the Word of Life.

Our Savior lives out the Law (fulfills the Law). He lives out Grace (offers Grace to everybody). He bears the fruit of the Spirit. You and I are not up to it, are we? How can we curb our sharp, critical tongue? How can we humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord? God provides this glorious, loving, unchanging Son of His. May each one here today receive this "implanted word which is able to save our souls." (cf Ja 1:21-22)
Amen.