June 26

Grace and peace to you this day.

This week we will continue our walk through the books of the Bible in order with a brief look at the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is generally thought to have been written between 60 and 70 AD, and its author is unknown. It is a letter written generally to Jews who recently had adopted this new religion called Christianity, but who now were possibly thinking of reverting to the old ways of Judaism. It starts with this:

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe” (1:1-2).

This is a powerful statement, and speaks to the path God’s voice, and His plan of salvation, have taken through the course of Biblical history. The author’s Jewish audience would have been most familiar with the books of the prophets (Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah, and so on) and thus he starts with affirming these prophetic voices as those of the Lord Himself as He spoke to the Jewish people’s “ancestors.”

But then the author pivots and states that just as God spoke through the prophets, “in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son…”

This is a bold and remarkable claim that certainly would have gotten the attention of his Jewish audience, who had been waiting for the Messiah for over a thousand years. The author is announcing that as surely as God spoke through the prophets, He now speaks through His Son, “whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.”

What a marvelous truth. God has revealed His will “in these last days,” meaning with the inauguration of His Kingdom here on earth, through His Son. And that will, as revealed then and revealed to us today, is a will born of grace and love: the will of redemption for His people. Redemption for you, and redemption for me.

And so my prayer for you today is this: be still and listen to God’s voice. Be still and submit to His will. It is the will spoken by God through the Son, loudly and clearly, on a Roman cross.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
June 27

Grace and peace to you this day.

I love how one of the themes throughout Scripture is the eternal nature of the Almighty. A standard definition of eternity is something like “infinity, or unending time.” But I think that when we talk about the eternal nature of God, that doesn’t quite do justice to this difficult concept. Rather, I think that when we discuss or think about God’s eternal existence, it means that He exists outside of the constraints of time, and thus is not bound by it, as we humans are.

I know. Tough stuff to wrap our earthly brains around. In any case, Scripture repeatedly confirms this essential element of God’s nature, and the author of Hebrews expresses it like this:

“And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world” (4:3). This is commonly thought to refer to God’s work of Creation, and that He finished His creative work at that time. But, I think it has a deeper meaning, especially when reading Hebrews in its entirety.

In yesterday’s passage, we saw that God, having previously spoken through the prophets, now speaks through Jesus His Son, “through whom also he made the universe” (1:1). This means that Jesus is the agent of all Creation; its purpose and its destiny. And because the mind of God conceived Creation in eternity, that means that He conceived of Jesus’ purpose in eternity, and that purpose is to bridge the gap between us and the Father so that we, in turn, will exist with Him in eternity.

Yikes. Writing all that made my brain hurt. So before I go and take a nap, know this: God conceived of you and me in eternity. God conceived of Jesus’ redemptive work in eternity. And God conceived that we would all meet one day, and desires that we place our trust in His Son, so that we could all one day live in Paradise. For eternity.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
June 28

Grace and peace to you this day.

I was recently reading a commentary on the way we pray in modern times. Typically, we pray with heads bowed and eyes closed (and for those of us who are still able, on our knees). Nothing wrong with that. It shows a proper attitude of submission and humility.

That being said, we should noy confuse submission and humility with an understanding that we have no rightful place in God’s courts. To the contrary. The author Hebrews expresses it like this:

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (4:14-16).

Notice here that the author declares that we can approach God’s throne with “confidence.” The King James says that we may approach “boldly.” The Greek word used here implies that we can express ourselves freely and without constraint or apprehension. What are we to make of this? Here’s what I think.

First of all, we can take this to mean that God wants to hear from us. He desires that we approach Him. And note that His throne is described as a “throne of grace.” This is in great contrast to the rulers of the day and their thrones. One did not simply approach Caesar’s throne boldly or with confidence. Nor did one do so with Herod, or Pharaoh, and so on. To do so risked death. Not so with God.

Secondly, while we can approach God with confidence, we should not make the mistake of thinking that we can do so because of anything that we have done. We can do so only because of what Jesus has done, “the great high priest who has ascended into heaven.” It is not our work, but His, that allows us to be in possession of such confidence.

So go ahead. Bow your head. Fold your hands. Close your eyes. Maybe even kneel down. And then, approach your Creator in confidence, and thank Jesus for making it all possible.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
June 29

Grace and peace to you this day.

The book of Hebrews has one of the best expositions in all of Scripture on what it means to walk in faith. This was a new concept for the Jewish Christians who were taught to believe that they gained God’s favor through obedience to the Law. This is what the author says:

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (11:1-2).

Faith gives us “confidence” and “assurance.” Not our works. Not our actions. Not attending church on Sundays, though to be sure, those things are part of the walk of faith. But that walk must start with Jesus. It must be accompanied by Jesus. And it must conclude with Jesus.

The author then goes on to describe “the great cloud of witnesses” (12:1) who walked by faith: Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, and so on. People whose lives and stories would have been very familiar to the first century Jews.

Of course, none of those Biblical characters knew Jesus, but their lives, and their stories, and their faith, point us to Him and help lead us to Him.

So go ahead and walk the walk of faith. Be confident and assured. Have faith that the God who “formed” the universe at His “command” also planned for your salvation, and also at His command. That command was to His Son, who lovingly obeyed that so that our faith in Him would be fulfilled when our walk of faith becomes our walk of eternity.

IHS,
Pastor Lou
June 30
Grace and peace to you this day.
Here’s your musical devotion for the week. Turn up the volume and enjoy!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuuZMg6NVeA

IHA,
Pastor Lou