

Hebrews 9:15-28

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. Good morning and welcome to Holy Trinity Church. Last week we left you in the Writer to the Hebrews personal art gallery.

As if we were standing before two portraits, one on either wall. In fact, these portraits were facing one another.

The portrait of chapter 9, verses 1 through 10, was one that contained the imperfections of the Old Covenant.

There it was with all the elements of Israel's ancient tabernacle worship on display. Yet, contrasting it on the other side and staring it down with great vigor was the portrait of the perfections of the New Covenant.

Painted in bold strokes concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and His blood. I don't know what it's like for you when you stand in an art gallery, but there are times where you just stand and take it in.

[1 : 26] And that we did. And one begins to reflect on the wonder and the beauty of what has been depicted for us.

Certainly, that's the way our own verse of today begins. A reflection on all the things that have gone before and put to words, running through the mind of the onlooker, would be this.

Therefore, He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

In other words, it begins by rehearsing the greatness of the portrait that put Jeremiah's promise into effect. You remember, he builds an entire case for the strength of Christ as the mediator on Jeremiah's prophetic word and promise that a new covenant would be cut by God on our behalf. And so, as we stand in the opening phrase of the verse, it is as though we are reflecting on Jeremiah's promised inheritance.

[2 : 50] The internal change of heart. Where he did something in our heart, not merely external. The fact that in Christ there is universal access for all to God.

Complete with eternal benefits. Namely, that God's mercy will be ongoing. And the remembrance of our sins as being completely paid for will have no end.

That's the portrait. Those are the blessings. The promised inheritance. So it doesn't surprise us, even in that opening phrase, to come to the word promise.

Because that is what Jeremiah put forward. Nor the word inheritance. Because all of those things are ours in Christ. An internal change of heart. Universal access to all.

And eternal blessings of God. The forgiveness of our sins. It will never end. It will never end. Your sins will always, always, and evermore be forgiven by God through Christ.

[3 : 58] A mercy that extends from generation to generation on into eternity. Forevermore. Without end. No sins counted to us.

That is a portrait that is so awe-inspiring. That as we begin to move from it and to leave, as it were, the author's art gallery, A question begins to emerge in the mind of the viewer.

Why was it so necessary for my inheritance to come at the expense and cost of Christ's death?

Let me put it more generally. Why did Jesus have to die in order for that work to be accomplished, for this inheritance to be gained?

Was there no other way? In this week's text, the writer seems to already be aware that that is the question that his painting evokes.

[5 : 08] So that when the text turns on its hinge at the end of verse 22, it will place with great force that idea. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

That's the conclusion of the writer. But the question of the listener is why. Why is it necessary that blood must be shed if forgiveness is to be offered?

How is it that the great inheritance is dependent on such an event as his death on the cross? The writer then is like a docent in the gallery, already aware that after you've reflected on the majesty of the work of Jesus, you're moving now through the next room and you're asking the docent, but can you tell me why?

Why did he have to die for that to come into effect? That's what 15b through 22 really unfold.

[6 : 25] And the answer the docent gives is simply this. Why? That's the way inheritance works, you know. Here we are reflecting on the promised eternal inheritance that is given us in 15a.

But the answer is given in 15b through 22, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. The inheritance is given because a death has occurred.

He goes on, For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

Why did Jesus have to die? Because that's the way inheritance works. Now that baffles some, and genuinely so.

Why can't inheritance be given to us another way? Well, imagine that you had a wealthy relative.

[7 : 43] Yes, I'm asking you to imagine. And imagine that a promise had been given to you that it would all end up in your lap.

Well, there's no way for that to actually happen without the death of the one who made it. That's the way inheritance works.

I've made out a declaration, my final testament, my last will. In fact, we probably ought to update it. Done some time ago. But we've made promises, Lisa and I have, concerning what's to happen with our estate, whatever that may be, at the time of our death.

But the inheritors, the heirs, will not receive it until a death occurs. That is what moves between promise and fulfillment.

And if you want to know why Christ had to die to shed his blood, that Jeremiah's promise might be extended internally to you, universally to all, and eternally beyond time, because inheritance is given when a death secures it.

[9 : 13] Some are baffled. Others are disgusted. The idea that blood would be our redemption, well, that cuts across modern day sensibilities.

We all begin to reflect on ritual, pagan, sacrificial offerings. Let me put it to you this way. We prefer a more genteel God.

I mentioned last week a man by the name of Charles Simeon who became a Christian in his first year as an undergrad at Cambridge as a portrait of one who's responding to what the writer to the Hebrews is saying.

But that's not always the case, is it? Martin Gardner in the early 90s wrote a book entitled *The Flight of Peter Fromm*. It really was kind of a quasi-biographical sketch of his own exit from Christianity in a novel form.

He writes as one who comes to the University of Chicago as a first-year undergrad having been reared in a fundamentalist Christian-believing home and over the course of his university days finds himself stepping away from the truths of the scriptures as the writer to the Hebrews would lay it out.

[10 : 53] And he does so because he ends up preferring a more genteel God. The book cascades on to this moment when in the darkness of a night, a Sunday night, he happens stances to walk into Moody Church downtown.

And in the midst of the service, they are singing these words. There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins. And sinners plunge beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains. If you've grown up in church, you can hear it. Lose all their guilty stains. Lose all their guilty stains. And sinners plunge beneath the blood.

Lose all and Fram stands disgusted with the notion that blood alone will satisfy the wrath of God. And he exits the church into the cool night air to gain his breath and to once and for all reject the Christian message. See, the honest thinking person here today may be baffled concerning why did Jesus have to die?

[12 : 09] But the common person today is disgusted with the notion that blood must be shed if forgiveness of sins is to come.

Well, what does the writer say to such a thought that is emerging always in our context and in our own minds? I think he demonstrates in verses 18-22 that that individual has a certain arrogance

about the way God should work.

It's not just ignorance that blood is required. It's an arrogance that that's not the way God would work. Look at verses 18-22.

Therefore, not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop and sprinkled both the book in itself and all the people saying, and this quote, of course, comes from Exodus 24 when they're standing at Mount Sinai, this is the blood of the covenant that God has commanded for you.

And in the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law, almost everything is purified with blood and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

[13:30] What he's saying is, that's not merely the way inheritance works. That was always the way God had been working in Israel's ancient cultic worship system.

We saw representations and regulations that demonstrated blood must be required before we come before God. Let me put it this way. Without death, sins cannot be forgiven.

There is a necessity to the blood. The reason is, it's related to God's holiness and our own uncleanness.

We have been given life by Him and life is in the blood, yet we have rejected Him, therefore we have rejected His life at the cost of our blood. And so, a substitute was required.

The shedding of blood was necessary. But people today, many have no desire to hear it, no need for it.

[14:41] Why? Because in the heart of hearts, we aren't all that bad and God isn't all that displeased. I've been reflecting this week on Billy Graham with all of the simplicity of his preaching in the mid-20th century.

He went to Cambridge University, 1955, to conduct a mission invited there by Kikyu, which is the equivalent, actually the forerunner, of what would be inter-varsity in our own country.

And he spoke at St. Mary's, if you've ever been there. The place was packed, as you can imagine. This simple country preacher walking into the hallowed halls of Cambridge University and the dons present before him.

And for three nights, Billy Graham attempted to preach in a way that would win the intellect. He actually refers to it in those terms. He was trying to address them through intellect.

And then it says in his biography, though undergraduates listened hungrily, Billy knew he was not getting through to their hearts. Following the third sermon, he wrestled with this desire.

[15:58] He threw aside his prepared sermons and he preached once again as if before the most ordinary audience audience in the world. And one who was converted at that time later wrote, interestingly, when he tried somewhat unsuccessfully to be academic, his preaching lacked power.

But when he accepted the apparent foolishness of the message of Christ crucified and preached it with simplicity and integrity, the power of God's Spirit was manifestly at work, changing the lives of many undergraduates, it is a lesson I have never forgotten.

Let me say it then to you simply today. To the one who is disgusted with the notion that God requires blood for the setting aside of sins.

Who are you to determine how He saves? And who are you to go against all of what He has disclosed in ancient Israel's regulations for worship so that when His own Son would die for you, the shedding of His blood, there would be access for all.

I know it sounds foolish, but I'm a believer in the blood.

[17:38] The irony to me is that those who continue to reject the Christian message, I should say some, who continue to reject the Christian message on this account, those who are also the loudest voices on the theme of justice that must be done, when it comes to God, they would have Him simply overlook all their transgressions.

There would be no accounting before God, no reckoning required. they would never consider applying such stupid logic to the injustices being committed in our day, nor should they.

The call for justice today, for the sins that are being committed one person against another, are not in any way setting aside a commitment to love.

Yet with God, they would have Him be love, for God is love, but strip Him of any divine right for justice. And that is what the gospel does.

That is the strength of the Christian message. That is where you really turn here into verse 23. The love of God comes to you in Christ in such a way that actually satisfies God's justice.

[19 : 04] It says, thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rights, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

That is the argument of the author. Not only does Jesus minister to you from a better place two weeks ago, not only does He minister to you according to a better promise one week ago, but He ministers to you because He is a better sacrifice right there in the text.

He is the one who is sufficient to bring you to Christ. And then the text cascades to a close. Very simply, this latter half, three reasons set down along temporal lines that indicate the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ's death.

Why is His sacrifice a better sacrifice? Look at what the writer says in 24a. For Christ has entered, not into holy places with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself.

In other words, why is Christ a better sacrifice than anything you could do? The answer is because it's already completed. It's been done. Look at the past tense.

[20 : 20] Christ has entered. It's better because it's done. Finished. Complete. Full. Ours is a better sacrifice because the death needed for the inheritance to kick in on your account has already taken place.

You're not waiting to get your inheritance, says the writer to the Hebrews. It's already coming.

Somebody's already writing checks. Somebody's already giving an internal change of heart.

Somebody's already demonstrating that there's a universal appeal to it. That it reaches the lowest of all sinners. That no one is outside the reach of it. It's available to all.

And that the mercy will be extended forevermore. Yours in Christ is a better sacrifice because it's past. It's already completed. 24b through 26.

Not only because it's in the past, but for what's taking place in the present. Not only is it completed already, but notice his next argument, it's better because it's always in effect. Look at 24b.

[21 : 29] Now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Notice the change. We've moved from past tense to present tense. It's better because he is now in the presence of God on our behalf.

And notice how he follows it up. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly as the high priest enters into holy places every year with blood not his own. For then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world.

But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. I mean, think of it. He's saying it's already in effect.

Our sacrifice is better because our mediator is now standing in the presence of God on your behalf. You don't have to wait for that. He's there.

He isn't like the old school mediators of the old covenant that we're actually going to see walked out in our own country again this week the evening of Tuesday through the evening of Wednesday the celebration of Yom Kippur the day of atonement which our text is referring to the day in which the high priest only one day a year goes in and offers sacrifices for himself and for the people.

[22 : 50] One day a year and then the collection begins again and what he's saying is you have a better sacrifice because he now stands and he's not just standing coming he's not going and coming no rope on his foot he stands he sits in the presence of God and mediates for you it's amazing 24 hours a day he is forgiving sin 24 hours a day he is strengthening faith always always interceding always pleading always pulling always praying in the ear of the father that the spirit might be attendant on your life that you might make progress in the gospel you don't have to wait one day a year you don't have to come time and time again he's there always there how can this not be a better sacrifice how can your appreciation for the glories of

Christ in the portrait of his death indicate to you rather than disgust absolute delight three reasons I mentioned that's only two it's a better sacrifice because it's completed already past tense 24 a it's a better sacrifice because it is always in effect present tense 24 b to 26 it's a better sacrifice because 27 and 28 the greatest rewards are yet still to come look at how it moves to the future and just as it appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment so Christ having been offered for once to bear the sins of many will appear future will appear a second time not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him I don't know if you can understand the strength of it we need words set down in song to do it but before the throne of

God above you have a strong and perfect plea a great high priest whose name is love whoever lives and pleads for me behold him there the risen king and he is coming once again to give you the full dispensation the full treasure store of God's inheritance!

upon you you're going to have so much coin in your lap of eternal blessings because he will appear once again ours is a better sacrifice our meteor will one day appear again and notice according to the text not to judge us not to deal with our sin but to save us to the uttermost forever more I don't know if there are more encouraging words in all the scriptures than these what assurance do you see the logic of his argument at Christ first appearing he put our inheritance into play with his own death and as if the past and present benefits of that death are not enough for us at the time of his second appearing he will not judge us in accordance with the judgment that the law demands at the time of our own death rather he will save us all of us who eagerly are waiting for him now think of it let me give you some stats you tell me what they refer to three a second 180 a minute 11,000 an hour 256,000 a day 96 million a year three quarters of a which did not know it was coming to them and the writer says that we know we're appointed to live once and then comes judgment but the writer wants you to know that in his first coming his own death is now already being applied to those who believe and at his return your own death will not work towards your condemnation but to your salvation it says but to save those who eagerly are waiting for him now notice you got to wait for him then there's stuff you're not going to get here there's a future dimension to the truths of scripture that keep you from thinking that all of

God's benefits come to you in this life you're not going to get all your benefits now you're going to get enough now but you're going to have eternal benefits that are going to be paid out at a later date his death for our present inheritance and with his death a fearful expectation of our future judgment is upended for when he appears there will be our promised full inheritance I don't know how to say it other than to put yourself in the art gallery to bring yourself to understand what the writer wants you to think of let me close with one last portrait oil on canvas you're not the painter you're the subject you're standing before God it's the day of your death the moment after your death and the portrait is showing to us the offering you intend to bring what is in your hands what sacrifice do you intend to arrive into the presence of

[29 : 30] God with do you even feel you need one are you going to arrive in sweat and toil are you going to lay out your acts of consecrated service are you going to show him that a little blood was spilled in hopes of gaining the greatness of forever the blood of Christ alone is what we bring and when you begin to do that you walk out with a real sense of blessed assurance I sat with a man this week preparing for surgery no ordinary surgery but one that in his words to me privately caused you to look over to the other side and he told me he was ready to wake up and look his

Lord in the face why because he had an assurance that the blood of Christ was sufficient he had a dependence that that blood shed would be applied for his own forgiveness for those today who need to embrace it I simply say to you in the sense of the writer to the Hebrews do you not know has nobody told you your inheritance has already come it is to be availed through faith in the death that took place in the past do you not know has nobody told you that there is one standing in the presence of God every day ready to hear from you and to intercede for you do you not know that this life will soon be passed and on that day eternal storehouses of divine pleasure will be bestowed on all who are eagerly waiting for him blessed assurance

Jesus is mine oh what a foretaste of glory divine I am an heir of salvation I am purchased of God I am born of his spirit I am washed in his blood this is my story this is my song this is the Christian story and the Christian song may he receive it from our lips today with joy and pleasure our heavenly father we now prepare ourselves to stand in your presence in dress rehearsal form knowing that we will stand there one day we pray then that our hearts would be fixed on the sufficient work of the blood of Christ that we would never be ashamed of it for indeed in its foolishness we have come on to the power of God in whose name we pray! Amen!