

What Really Motivates Us

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[0 : 00] Well, it's a great privilege to have the opportunity of talking to you. I've looked forward to it these many days this week as I have prepared Hebrews chapter 4 to talk to you about.

But I've come to the conclusion that there's so much in it that I can't possibly convey it to you anyway. So I should sit down, and I know some of you would say amen to that.

But I'm going to struggle through that at least you might get one or two little handholds on this chapter and that from that you might find enormous personal benefit.

It is a huge chapter, huge in the sense of the subject it deals with and the issues that it makes clear. The other day I had the great advantage of listening to the CBC, and they, with their usual on-the-spot kind of wisdom, had contracted some wise man to tell them about why Mr. Mulroney was having trouble getting people from the private sector to work in government, in the high posts of government.

[1 : 33] And this wise man said, the fact of the matter is there's more money in the private sector. And unless you can get somebody motivated by the prestige and power available to him as a member of government, he won't give up his job in the private sector to go and work in Ottawa.

Well, you understand that, I'm sure. That longing that they have to have for power and prestige, which will be even stronger than the longing they have for wealth.

And it's kind of advantageous to be able to point at them and say that's their problem. But you see, it's not their problem.

It's the problem of each one of us. What is it that drives us to be the person we are? What is it that motivates us?

Because whatever that is, that longing, that desire, that want for power or prestige or money or whatever it is, that is the chief engine by which human society moves ahead.

[3 : 06] And if people don't have that desire, then our whole society would be reduced to shambles in a week. But people wake up in the morning hungry for power, hungry for money, hungry for recognition, hungry for prestige, driven by hopes and ambitions and all sorts of wonderful things.

Just to be able to hope to get hold of something. Supposing you wanted to be an Olympic athlete. Imagine the conditioning you would have to go through from the team psychologist in order to make you so hungry for gold that you would devote hours and hours every day to training.

That you would be prepared to sacrifice the rest of your life in taking drugs that might give you an edge in the competition that was coming up.

The drive is there in all of us and it really pushes us to accomplish things. Without it, I think we would be lost.

[4 : 32] It's nice when you're poor and unsuccessful because then you can assume that you're modest, godly, and humble. When in fact, all you are is a failure.

And because that drive is there for all of us and I think we have to do something with it.

And you can see it in the way people dress, in the address of their homes, the cars they drive, the clothes, the clubs, the friends, the schools, the people their children marry.

You get close to anybody. And you can feel the throb of that person working towards some goal or other.

Maybe it's a throb that is just frustrated by depression or by illness, but it's there and it's got to be there. So how are you going to focus it and how are you going to direct it and what are you going to do with it?

[5 : 46] It's hard to know. The difficulty is that we have a culture and a society where we publicly deny that we're motivated by anything like that at all.

But privately, we're driven by this ambition and the longing and the fulfillment. There's something we want.

Maybe it's, you know, I mean, kids don't take drugs to destroy themselves. They take drugs because they're driven to try and achieve something that they can't define, but they're driven by something within themselves.

And you can just feel it in them, even though they can't articulate it. We don't know what it is. We can't describe it. We don't know whether it's good or bad or what it is.

But we know that it's there. And we know that when it is frustrated and when it is disappointed, then we're very unhappy.

[6 : 56] When it finds fulfillment, we're very happy. And there the thing is. Well, you see that that's what I think Hebrews chapter 4 is talking about.

Because it uses two highly contradictory words. And those two highly contradictory words are that we are to strive to rest.

We're to be driven toward a particular goal. Now, the context out of which it comes is this.

And I need to explain one or two things to you. The way it talks about it in Hebrews chapter 4, quote Psalm 95. And it says that Moses and Joshua had brought the people into the wilderness.

And they were wandering around in the wilderness. And while they were in the wilderness, look at Numbers 11, 5. It's got a nice unbiblical kind of verse in there that will startle you a little.

[8 : 21] Numbers chapter 11, verse 5. The rabble that he's talking about. It's 127 in the Old Testament section.

The rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, Oh, that we had meat to eat.

We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for nothing. The cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. And now our strength is dried up and there is nothing at all but this man to look at.

It's a beautiful picture, isn't it? The onions, the garlic, the cucumbers. What are you having for lunch? He said, onions, garlic, and cucumbers.

And melons. That's what they were looking for. And yet, what they had was this thing that God, in a funny way, had provided for them called manna.

[9 : 37] And as far as I can tell, it was dull, flat, white, and tasteless. Very nourishing. I mean, it supplied all the needs.

But it wasn't melon, leeks, garlic, onion, cucumber, and fish. So they were craving this.

What it does is it points out the fact that all of us live a life in which we are craving for something.

And that's something we're craving for is the thing that we strive for. And the contradiction that we have is that mostly what it is that we crave, we're not allowed to have publicly anyway.

And so we divide our lives into the public pursuit of prestige and honor and dignity and the private satisfaction of the craving and the desire that we have within us.

[10 : 47] And that kind of contradiction keeps us a long way away from religion because religion only heightens the contradiction.

At least if you're left alone, you can go wholeheartedly after the thing that you pray. And even if you have to disguise what it is you're doing, you at least can go after it.

But if you go to church, if you get involved with religious and moral people, then all those things get mixed up and you don't know what you're trying to do with your life.

You don't know where you're going. And the striving doesn't go away. People can say to you, thou shalt not.

But they can't take away the desire that thou shalt. And it's there still, even if somebody has said, don't do it.

[11 : 55] And God, in a sense, messed up the whole pitch when he gave the Garden of Eden away and said to Adam and Eve, but don't touch this. So that we have this confusion within ourselves.

And how do we handle it? Hebrews chapter 4 is to tell you how you handle it. Therefore it begins, While the promise of entering his rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach him.

The thing that the children of Israel wanted was to go back to the leeks and garlic of Egypt, and the thing that had been promised to them was the promised land. And that's what is meant in verse 2 by the good news was preached to them.

They were promised this thing, and it would be the fulfillment of all their deepest longings. But they would prefer the thing they knew, the thing they felt they had almost within their grasp, to the thing that was long years of manna and water and wandering into a promised land that was full of opposition anyway.

That was the, that's the sort of crux, if you want. That's the cross that's at the center of our life. Let me see.

[13 : 22] What he says to us here is, the promise of entering his rest remains. If you were to follow this through in the chapter, you would see that it was promised to Joshua.

Then David said, it's promised to you because Joshua didn't find the fulfillment of it. And then Hebrews said, it was promised to David who said it was promised to Joshua.

So it's promised to you to whom I'm writing this letter to the Hebrews so that you can enter it. And then when we read the epistle to the Hebrews, we find that it's promised to us.

So the rest that remains belongs to us, belongs to those who received the epistle to the Hebrews, belongs to those to whom David wrote Psalm 95, and belong potentially to those who wandered in the wilderness.

And it's still there. What is it? Well, the same chapter four goes on to describe what it is. In verse four, when it says somewhere, he spoke about the seventh day.

[14 : 29] God rested on the seventh day from all his works. That God had a goal and ambition, and he drove and strode and accomplished what he wanted to accomplish.

And the end of that accomplishment was rest. And that rest, which comes at the end of accomplishment, is the rest that he promises to us.

It's the rest which is the result of striving after something, going after something, going after one of the chief jobs in Ottawa, if you want, going after money, if you want, going after whatever it is you really want.

But what Hebrews chapter four wants you to do is to sort out what it is that you really want. And to be prepared to accept some hardship in view of the future promise.

And that's where I think we're caught. Because we live in a world where everything is here right now.

[15 : 40] There is nothing you could ask for that somebody isn't at the end of the telephone waiting to bring to you wherever you want it delivered right here and right now.

Sex, food, lottery tickets, whatever you want. It's all there for you. It's all immediately available. But if you buy into that, he says, then you're in the position of failing to reach the thing that belongs to you.

Because what rest means is that God causes to cease this strident. It comes to an end.

It doesn't go on forever. It goes on until it's reached its goal. And when you reach that goal, then there is rest for you.

[16 : 43] And that rest is the rest that God enjoys when he finished creation. You enter into sharing that rest. You have striven, and then you come to that rest.

One commentator says, it's entering in to the undoubted possession of what unquestionably belongs to you.

That's something. That's what it is. And God wants to make sure you get it. And he wants to make sure that you've heard that it's there to get it.

And no matter how many things you may long for, no matter how much the leeks and garlic may fill your mind and be the focus of your striving, that's just a symbol, really, for all the longings and cravings of our hearts, whatever they need.

There's good news. And if this good news can be received in faith, then you can enter into the undoubted possession of what unquestionably belongs to you.

[17 : 59] That's what Christian life is about. It's not there just to upset you, to deny you your leeks and garlic, which is what a lot of people think is there.

It's there because there is something infinitely more. And for you to live your life and not know that this belongs to you and that this is worth striving for like nothing else is the waste of your life.

How can you do it? How can you really tell? How can you know what is the deepest longing of your own heart? We blindly struggle for things in our greed and in our desire and in our craving and in our longing.

We don't know why we want them, but we go after them and we want them so badly and we go after them without understanding them or articulating what has happened. If somebody says to you, you're being greedy, it's impossible to imagine if that's really what's happening.

We know that the longing is there and that we can't deny it and that it's at the center of our lives. But you see, how do we find out what our hearts really want?

[19 : 25] How do we know what would really satisfy us deeply? How do we avoid being sold off with some cheap imitation of what life is all about and buying into that and wasting the years of our life in the pursuit of something which ultimately is not going to satisfy us, which ultimately is not going to prove to be the undoubted possession which unquestioningly belongs to us.

It's not going to be there. We're going to end up in that position. Well, this chapter wonderfully tells you how you can figure out what really is at the center of your life.

What really drives and motivates you and me. You want to find out about it? People don't.

We don't want to find out about it. I can acknowledge that and you can acknowledge that. But it can be found out about it. That's the point that Hebrews make.

You can know. And that's why I want you to look at Hebrews chapter 4, verse 11. That's where striving to enter the rest is.

[20 : 54] You see, strive to rest. Verse 11. Strive to rest in order that you don't fall short of the undoubted possession which unquestionably belongs to you.

Strive to enter the rest. And in order that you might know where you're going, you're given the word of God which is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

And before him, no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. If you want to know the secrets of the longings of your own heart, if you want to know who you are and what you really want, then the word of God, like a surgeon's knife, will open up to you all the things that motivate you.

And it'll show you the pride and the greed and the lust and the ambition and all the bad things that are corrupting you.

It'll show that all to you. You want to know? Because the word of God is active. It's a living word.

And that's why we desperately need, we all desperately need, to be in continuing contact with the word of God as it opens up to us the motivations of our own hearts.

[22 : 43] Why did I get angry? Why did I blow my tongue? Why am I feeling hurt? Why am I offended? You want to know answers to questions like that?

Why can't I relate to people? Why am I ruthless in my handling of other people? You may not be able to change it, but you can know why it's happening.

You can know that it's there. And you can know that it's there because the word of God will reveal it to you.

You will stand, as it were, under the word of God, and it will pierce to the division of soul and spirit and joints and marrow concerning the thoughts and intentions of your heart.

You can know what they are. You don't go on blind. You can know what they are. Then it goes on to say, because the word of God can't do anything, I don't think, but totally devastate you.

[23 : 54] It just flattens you like a tornado. There's nothing left of you. All your pride and all your self-sufficiency and all your polite arrogance and all that stuff is just wiped out by the word of God.

There's nothing left. That's why it's wise not to go near it. Except there's another paragraph that you have been in the text of your heart.

And, uh, see, once you have been totally wiped out by discovering, uh, by discovering the thoughts and intentions of your own heart, seeing what, what motivates you, once you've discovered them, and he has wonderful comfort for you.

We have a great high priest who has passed into the heavens. Jesus, the Son of God. So, hold on. Hold on. Because he's not a high priest who's unable to sympathize with our weaknesses to understand our motivations and longings and desires and lusts and cravings.

[25 : 29] He's not that kind of a God. But one who, in every respect, has been tempted as we are. He knows all about from personal experience.

And because of that, chapter 4, and with this triumphant invitation which I'm making to you in Christ's name, let us then bring the confidence drawn near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy to be desperately and find grace without bringing her to you.

Pray to receive mercy and find grace to help our people. God's love to help us. Well, that's chapter 4 of Hebrews and John.

If it could then drive us to opening our hearts to the word of God and then bowing before our great high priest drawing near to the throne of grace we may find mercy and grace to help in our time of life so that we're not those who are carried away by our passions.

You know, T.S. Eliot talks about the fire or the fire. Some of you who are very clever will know where he talks about it. I don't guess but he talks about the fire or the fire.

[27 : 19] Either the fire of your ambition will destroy you like the fires of hell or the fire of God's Holy Spirit will drive you to the fulfillment and to the claiming the undoubted possession is unquestionably lost since God has offered it in our promise.

So T.S.L. says the fire will fire. Amen. Now we sing our offertory hymn number 372.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm.

[30 : 17] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

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[31 : 17] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

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Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. and take the glory of the Lord.

Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, forever and ever. All that is in the heaven and the earth is thine. All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

[32 : 30] Amen. Let us pray. Please turn in the prayer books to page 14.

On top of that page, there is a form of general intercession. A form in which many concerns that we have about our world and ourselves and our church are brought together in one prayer.

As we go through this prayer, as I pray through this prayer aloud, and I hope you pray silently.

For the troubles of the world, so do we pray for the troubles of South Africa.

The troubles of Latin America. The troubles of Latin America.

[34 : 25] The losers of Indianapolis. The fear of open words areations for this prayer. The love of European economy. Power of European finances.

Amen. Amen. For especially we pray for the good estate of the Catholic Church, that it may be so guided and governed by thy good spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, to hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

We pray for the Church this day, that we remember our own vision of God.

That we remember those known to each of us who have gone out into various parts of the world to work for the conclamation of the Gospel, wherever they may be.

We pray for the life ministry of our congregation.

[36 : 09] We pray for the ministries of many people within our lives. We say ministry to us, to the people before. We pray for the Lord.

We pray for the Lord. All those who are in any ways afflicted or distressed, mind, body, or a state. that we remember the names of those who were praying and who so wish, name them aloud, that we would join our prayers before.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[38 : 29] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[39 : 29] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Good Lord, and you're yea' sumbling.

Thank you. and cease thee to give us that due sense of all our wishes, that our hearts may be unfaithfully thankful, and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our gifts, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all our glory. Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee, and thus promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy name, thou wilt grant their requests.

[41 : 04] Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be most expedient for them, granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all.

Please be seated for the announcements. Good morning.

Very warm welcome to you all to St. John's. Special welcome to those of you who put your hands up at the beginning of the service, signifying that you were visitors and newcomers.

I'd like to invite you all to join us for a cup of tea or coffee in the church hall after the service. It appears that today is a day of noteworthy wedding anniversaries, and I would like you to join me in offering congratulations to Gladys and Gordon Noble, as they celebrate 50 years of marriage, and also to Doug and Margaret Simons, who are celebrating today their 25th anniversary.

[42 : 51] I've got the Noble family mixed up. It's Shirley and Gordon. I'm sure Gladys has been there. The issue of the church newsletter is at the back of the hall, and I would ask all of you to please pick it up, and if you see one for a friend or a neighbor that you can deliver, it would be to our advantage to save the postage, and they are all there for you to pick up after the service.

Finally, Susan Norman has a word about Sunday school. Thank you. Are you the kind of person who squirms in your seat when someone comes to ask for Sunday school teachers?

You always hope that God is calling somebody else and not you. I have three reasons why you should consider teaching in our Sunday school this year. First of all is the fact that those of us who are organizing the Sunday school believe that children are a blessing of God.

Now, you may have thought this was just for the parents, but good news, it's for everybody. We believe that the children in this congregation have been given to us by God, and if we, as a church, neglect their care and nurture in spiritual matters, we will miss out when we bless them and God's forgiveness.

Secondly, you may think that you have a gift in teaching. Here's a perfect opportunity to develop that gift. Now you may be thinking, ah, that lets me out.

[44 : 44] My gift is for teaching adults. After all, I've been to college. Well, here's more news for you. It's my firm conviction that if you, if we cannot convey Christian truth in a way that is understandable to children, then we're not going to have a lot of success without us.

Finally, here is a chance to follow the example of the Lord Jesus himself. He had a demanding time-taker. He had people constantly making demands of his time and energy, and yet he took time to be with children.

And I think that if we do the same, we are following his example. It does take sacrifice. It does take commitment.

But that, after all, is what the Christian mind is all about. If you'd like to make that kind of commitment, if you'd like to find out more about it, please sing, Lord Johnson, Paul Beeson, or myself.

After the stage. A little bird brought to my attention that there is an omission in the earlier announcement that Bill and Carol and Thomas are also celebrating an anniversary today.

[46 : 15] Congratulations. I published the bands of marriage between Donald William Wood and Margot Joy Sweeney, both of this city.

If any of you know cause or just impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony, you are to declare it. This is the third and final time of asking.

Now we close with our final hymn, number 391. ■ that iswen, axis, plenty, for us to E.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.
[49 : 16] Amen.