

REPETITION & REDEMPTION: HEBREWS 10:11-25

Good morning. Would you pray today's Collect with me one more time? It's one of my favorites, and particularly relevant to the preaching of God's Word... Let's pray:

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:

Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Have you ever done something over and over and over again, without receiving the desired results?

That is, something very *repetitive*, but not very *effective*?

- Maybe weeks and weeks of dieting and exercise, without losing a single pound?
- Or maybe it's been school-related: countless hours of study, and yet nothing seems to stick?
- Or at work: years and years at the same, or at many different companies, without any sense of fulfillment or security?
- Or maybe it's a broken relationship or marriage: try as you might, nothing can close the distance, silence the arguments, or fill the silence...

Repetition, without results.

Such is the human story, on its own.

As the book of Ecclesiastes begins...

**Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.**

**³ What does man gain by all the toil
at which he toils under the sun?**

Let's be honest. We don't just face repetition without results when it comes to exercise, work, and relationships.

- Often, worship feels repetitive, not effective...
- Reading the Word of God feels repetitive, not effective...
- Crying out to God in prayer feels repetitive, not effective...

Even these *good* things can become nothing more than dutifully taking our spiritual vitamins as we try to give our own lives some semblance of meaning... as we try to secure our own freedom...to grant ourselves peace.

So...just try harder!

- Attend church more often.
- Read the Bible better.
- Pray harder.
- And if those things don't work, just give up.

Amen?! Amen?!

No!

That's a recipe for disaster, because it's missing the main ingredient.

What's the main ingredient?

Who is the main ingredient?

Open your Bible to Hebrews chapter 1.

(That's on page 1001 of the pew Bibles underneath the seats.)

We're going to "land" in Hebrews chapter 10, but we need a bit of context before we get there.

See, the anonymous author of Hebrews wastes no time in taking us to the main ingredient – the one who most clearly reveals who God is and what God has done. Hebrews 1:1-4 says:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Hebrews stays with this comparison between Jesus and angels for the first two chapters. Jesus is better.

In chapters 3-4 (follow along with me), Jesus is compared to Moses. Jesus is better, because unlike Moses (and Joshua), the living Word of God can bring God people to God's eternal, peaceful REST.

We then reach a crescendo in 4:14-16 (on page 1003):

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Now, chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 are all one long, sustained argument that **Jesus Christ is a better priest than any other, because, by his better sacrifice, he brings about a better covenant between God and humanity.**

Today, as we take a look at Hebrews 10:11-25, I'd like us to consider the following:

Without Jesus, we have repetition without redemptive results.

But with Jesus, we have redemption with repeated results.

Let's take a look at the first half of that statement:

I. Without Jesus We Have Repetition without Redemptive Results (10:11)

The author of Hebrews concludes the long argument of chapters 5-10, the long argument about Christ's better priesthood, with a final comparison between Jesus and the Old Testament priests. Look at verse 11:

¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

Repetition, without redemptive results.

Sure, on one hand, the sacrificial system, instituted by God himself, was a reminder of God's mercy.

- If you committed a sin, all was not lost.
- You weren't immediately zapped by a lightning bolt.
- The God of the Old Testament, like the God of the New Testament, was merciful (because they're the same God!). And He provided a means of at least limited forgiveness.

But, on the other hand, the sacrificial system was also a gigantic, bloody reminder that

- **sin was a serious deal,**
- **that it brought about death,**
- **and that it wasn't going away on its own any time soon.**

Even when things were going well, and Israel was faithfully worshipping God at the temple, can you imagine the monotony?

- Day after day, year after year,
- countless sins committed, countless animals slaughtered.
- It's only a matter of time until you sin again,
 - until you have to pick out another animal and make the trip to the temple...
 - where a priest would slaughter your animal for you as a sacrifice to God.
- Will there ever be any rest?
 - Any **redemptive results**?
 - Any **final forgiveness**?

Yes, because:

II. With Jesus, We Have Redemption (10:12-21)

Let's keep reading:

¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Unlike the priests who could never catch a break to sit down, because there were always more Israelites who needed to make sacrifices, **Jesus is now seated.**

- Why?
 - Because **his job is done.**
 - Redemption with no need for repetition.
- Why was his redemption so effective?
 - Because he offered a better sacrifice, the best sacrifice...
 - as the great high priest, the very Son of God, he offered his very self!
 - He defeated Sin, first by taking Death itself, as the inevitable consequence of Sin, to its grave.
 - And then by rising again from the grave, as the first fruit of Life's victory over Death.
- Why did he do this?
 - As verses 15-18 state, by quoting Jeremiah 31, he sacrificed himself to bring about the better, New Covenant:

¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

¹⁶ “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord:

**I will put my laws on their hearts,
and write them on their minds,”**

¹⁷ then he adds,

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

There is no longer any point to offering up further sacrifices.

Now, I hope that none of you has ever offered up an animal sacrifice!

So does this mean anything for us today?

I think it does.

Because although we don't sacrifice animals to God at the temple, we do run ourselves ragged to give our lives meaning, to offer sacrifices to idols of our own creation.

What's your idol?

- Physical Fitness?
- Financial Security?
- Academic Achievement?
- Physical Safety?
- Relational Security?
- Peace and Quiet?
- Public Opinion?
- A Vague Sense of Spiritual Health,
 - As long as you take your spiritual vitamins of Bible, prayer, and church?
- A Vanilla-pudding Vision of Heaven,
 - where the golden streets,
 - the huge mansions
 - and your deceased friends will be nice,
 - even if God isn't there?

Friends, we still offer sacrifices to idols today.

And our lives are filled with exhausting repetition, without redemptive results.

Until we see Jesus, and the redemption he has achieved, through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension to his seat at God's right hand!

This once-for-all redemption offer us:

- Perfection and completeness.
 - This is true biblical PEACE, which is much more than just the absence of conflict.
- Holiness as the set-apart people of God.
 - This is true uniqueness and identity, which the world cannot offer!
- The Holy Spirit,
 - Who both assures us of and enables these redemptive results.
 - Who writes the laws of God on our very hearts and minds.

Furthermore, let's read vv. 19-21:

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

Thanks to our Great Priest's sacrifice of his own life, we household members of God have forgiveness of sins, which means that we have confident, unparalleled access to God.

Such are the results of redemption.

So, this means that we, like Jesus now, can sit down and do nothing forever.

Right?

Wrong.

Redemption means that we no longer live by *repetition without results*, offering sacrifices to our idols...

But redemption does not mean inaction or stagnation!

Why?:

- Because, as verse 13 reminds us, Jesus is sitting in *anticipation* of the final defeat of his enemies: Sin and Death.
- Because, as verse 14 reminds us, although Jesus' sacrifice is eternally sufficient to perfect us, we are still being sanctified,
 - we are still being made **holy** in the time between Christ's ascension to God's right hand, and his coming again to judge the living and dead.
- Because, as verse 16 reminds us, the "laws" of God which are *inscribed* by the Holy Spirit on our **hearts** and **minds** are not just for rote memorization, but for transforming liberation!
 - We are transformed and set free
 - from being exhausted lovers of self
 - into being worshipful lovers of God and our neighbors.
 - This freedom, from ourselves, for God, and for others is TRUE FREEDOM, unlike any freedom the world has to offer.

III. With Jesus, We Have Redemption with Repeated Results (10:19-25)

And these repeated results of redemption are those of WORSHIP, in faith, hope, and love.

First, Faith. Let's read verse 22:

²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Through the waters of **baptism**, which link us to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, we are welcomed into the community of faith.

Through the **sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit**, we are transformed from the inside out,

from having "an evil, unbelieving heart that *forsakes* the living God" (Hebrews 3:12) to having a true, sincere heart

- that **knows** how faithful God has been to us through Jesus Christ,
- and that **wants** to faithfully and obediently worship Him by making his goodness and faithfulness known to all of creation.

What does this faithful worship look like?

I suggest that it looks a lot like what we do here each Sunday!

Because God draws near to us, and we draw near to him through Word and Sacrament.

- And so we gather, to hear God's Word read and preached, believing that God still has something to say.
- And so we gather to baptize, to welcome people in, through Christ's death and resurrection, to **the New Covenant people of God**.
- And so we gather at the Lord's Table, to commune with Jesus Christ as his Body and Bride, and to proclaim his redemption.

We draw near to God, to worship in faith.

We also worship, secondly, in hope:

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Faith and persevering hope collide because we have faith in the faithful Promise-Maker.

- God has promised to redeem and restore the world he has made,
- to not let Sin and Death have the final word,
- and we await final fulfillment of this promise.

So, what does this hopeful persevering worship look like today, in the midst of a sin-stained world?

- Well, on one hand, it looks a lot like our brothers and sisters in Christ enduring persecution all around the world this very morning.
 - Let us remember and pray for them.

And on the other hand, even when we are not facing such persecution ourselves, I suggest that hopeful worship looks a lot like what we do here each Sunday!

After hearing the Word of God read and preached, we stand to **confess** our faith in the words of the Apostles or Nicene Creed.

- We confess God's Triune identity, and his redemptive acts as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- We confess that Jesus Christ "*will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.*"
- We "*look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.*" Amen?

We hold fast to our confession, to worship God in hope.

Finally, then, we worship in love.

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

What does this loving worship look like?

Sisters and brothers, I don't know how else to say this, but it looks like going to Church,

- not just to sit in a building,
 - listen to music,
 - listen to a motivational speech,
 - shake some hands,
 - eat a holy snack,
 - and get out of there as quickly as possible,
- but to sincerely participate in the LIFE of the Church,
 - which is a life spent worshiping the Triune God in faith, hope, and love
 - NOW, until Christ comes again,
 - and then FOREVERMORE, because worship will never, ever end.

If you miss a Sunday, or if you endure periods of spiritual dryness, does this mean you're not a Christian?

No.

But you cannot love and serve Jesus Christ

without loving and being a part

of His Body,

His Bride,

the CHURCH!

If worship is, at best, drudgery for you or for me,

If it's just another part of our

exhausting, repetitive, ineffective cycle,

If we're just counting down the minutes until we can leave,

then something is profoundly wrong.

Just like, if you can't stand your spouse's presence,

if you have to suffer through each conversation

and wish it were over as soon as possible,

then you might still be married,

but something is profoundly wrong!

So, what do we do if we're there?

If it is drudgery, if it is dry?

Are we on our own?

To try harder or give up?

No!

Remember, God draws near to us, through Word and Sacrament...

But also through EACH OTHER.

A better translation of verse 24, “**let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works**” is

“let us consider one another, unto the provocation of love and good works.”

In other words, verse 24 ***doesn't*** mean “*spend your time thinking of how to make so-and-so a better person*” (although, to be fair, iron does sharpen iron!)

It means, instead, that we **encourage** one another by showing mutual concern for our needs and difficulties.

This is the environment in which love and good works take place, as we all await our final redemption.

I suggest that we show this loving concern for each other in our Sunday worship and our daily worship through **PRAYER FOR HEALING**.

Broken people take broken people to the throne of grace **that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

I'm about to sit down. I promise!

After I do, the liturgy of God's Word will draw to a close, and we will move to the liturgy of the Eucharist.

Through both Word and Sacrament, let us draw near to God to worship in FAITH.

And in a moment, we are about to confess our faith in the words of the Apostles Creed.

Let us do so as we worship God in persevering HOPE.

Then, we will pray for the welfare of the Church and the world.

And during Communion, we will have four prayer teams to receive those who desire healing prayer.

As we pray and are prayed for, let us show concern for one another as we worship God in LOVE.

Let us worship God and give Him thanks, that,

because of Christ's once-for-all redemption,

we no longer have to live lives of ineffective repetition,

but can instead,

through the power of the Holy Spirit,

live lives of everlasting,

faithful,

hopeful,

loving worship.

Amen.