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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
February 18, 2018
1st Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Hebrews 12:1-4,
Passion History: Jesus washes Disciples' feet
Hymns: 394; 370; 307; 313:1

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Hebrews 6:19-20

This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and
steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil, ²⁰where
the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High
Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Looking to Jesus!

It is only to be expected that during this Lenten season our sermon
meditations will give special attention to Jesus. But don't we
always do that? Yes, of course we do. During the Epiphany season
that just ended last Sunday we were very much focused on Jesus
and the manifestation of His glory, His divine majesty so that we
might know and believe that Jesus was and is the Christ the Son of
God who was to come into the world. So what we are doing as we
enter the season of Lent is shifting our emphasis as we continue
looking at Jesus as Lord and Savior. Now we look at Jesus in His

passion, in His sufferings and death, remembering how He willingly humbled Himself to the point of death, even the death of the cross. We will be looking to Jesus to find the assurance that in His sufferings we find our hope of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Our Sunday meditations now through Palm Sunday will be based on texts from the Epistle to the Hebrews, an epistle (or letter) that was written to encourage Jewish Christians who were under duress, pressure being applied to them to turn away from Jesus, back to the observance of the ceremonial law for assurance of salvation.

This epistle is still of great value to us since we continue to feel the pressure of society to look elsewhere for assurance of salvation. The theme of our meditations comes from this morning's epistle lesson in which we were encouraged to keep looking to Jesus who endured the cross. In this first meditation we will observe the wonderful assurance that Jesus brings to our faith. Looking to Jesus who endured the cross we see that --

THEME: He Is Our Security.

Our text addresses the insecurities that come with life. It is not addressing internet security, or financial security. The world has many solutions for these. But these solutions do not bring us true and lasting security. Our text addresses the insecurities of the soul and of our hope of forgiveness and eternal life. In American English the word "hope" almost implies **in**security. After all, even the Scriptures agree that one hopes for things yet to come; one hopes for things that one does not see. Why would someone use the word hope regarding something already in hand? (Romans 8:4) If one does not yet have that for which one hopes, our human nature tends to feel **in**secure. And yet our text speaks of hope in exactly the opposite way.

Our text speaks of our hope of everlasting life as an **anchor** for the soul. An anchor is something that holds fast against the currents that would push one downstream or out into the ocean. An anchor holds one's watercraft securely, or it isn't much of an anchor. The hope we have is not based upon anything that we have done, that is of any merit of our own. That would not be a secure anchor for our faith. Neither is our hope founded on the stellar character that we

may have. Our hope is not based upon our feelings; that we feel strong and secure, and so we are. Our hope is not even based upon our faith, even though it is in integral part of our faith.

It is exactly these kind of notions that bring insecurity, and susceptibility to the currents of emotions, like shame and guilt on the one hand or false pride on the other. No, our anchor is not found by looking to oneself. Remember the theme of our Lenten meditations is “*Looking to Jesus who endured the cross.*” And that is where our text takes us.

I. His Sacrificial Death Made Complete Atonement for our Sins

We need to recall that this is an epistle written to Jewish Christians who were not only familiar with ceremonial law, but where being tempted to return to that ceremonial law as an anchor for the soul. So the inspired writer picks up one of the most significant aspects of the ceremonial law and reveals how it is fulfilled in Jesus and His sufferings and death on the cross.

Hebrews 6:19-20 This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil,²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Our text here references the Day of Atonement, also known as Yom Kippur. On the Day of Atonement the High Priest would enter into the Most Holy Place of the temple by passing through that thick curtain that served as a reminder of how our sin separates us from God. Entering that area of the temple represented entering the holy Presence of God. Because the High Priest was a sinner he didn't dare go through that veil without having made a sin offering, without having sprinkled the blood of the offering on the altar, and having the blood of the sacrifice in hand to sprinkle of the mercy seat, the cover of the Ark of the Covenant.

Of course the Jewish believer knew that all this is only symbolic, that it only represented the presence of God. Now all that symbolism had found its fulfillment in Jesus who as our Forerunner has gone to heaven. As the Son of Man, as our **brother** He stands before God. He stands before God having presented the

one real sacrifice for sin that avails before God. The blood of bulls and goats cannot pay for sin. The blood of animals has no value to redeem man from hell. And yet what the sacrifices did teach was that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. (Hebrews 9:22) The one true sacrifice for sin had to be the precious blood of the Son of God incarnate, Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Jesus entered into the **real** most holy place having offered once for all His holy precious blood, the one sacrifice for sin that satisfied the debt of our sin. This is the truth that John shares with us in his first epistle when he writes:

1 John 2:1-2 “And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

Jesus offering His life blood upon the cross paid the debt we owed. Indeed, His blood was and is the propitiation, or satisfying payment that reconciles the whole world to God. Sins are paid for. **All** sins are paid. All the sins of the whole **world**. There is no room left for doubt. Jesus declared from the cross: “**It is finished!**” The cup of suffering for the sins of the world had been emptied down to its last dregs. There is nothing left that we must do. Our anchor holds in the merits of Christ our Crucified Savior. Our forgiveness is secure. Our soul’s salvation is assured. And with that --

II. His Redeeming Blood Anchors our Hope of Eternal Life.

A couple of the words that pop out for us as we look to Jesus who endured the cross, is that He is our **Forerunner**, and our **Priest**.

Having offered His blood as both the sacrifice for sin and our High Priest, Jesus was received into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. The right hand position is the position of favor, the position of influence, the position of power. Jesus went there and was received by God the Father as our Forerunner. That speaks of us going to be with the Lord. On the night Jesus was betrayed, as His passion was about to begin, Jesus reassured His disciples about the things that would happen in the coming hours and where it would all lead. He told them:

John 14:1-3 “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.”

There was no need for the disciples’ hearts to be troubled by Jesus’ sufferings and death. He was going to prepare a place for them in heaven. He went to the cross and the grave, and then rose again and ascended on high, all to prepare a place for us in heaven. No need for our hearts to be troubled either. He did all this as **our** Forerunner, His sacrifice being sufficient for **our** peace with God. Jesus anchors our hope of eternal life. Even as He paid for our sins with His precious blood, and assures us of that sacrifice, imparting to us peace and forgiveness in the Sacrament of the Altar, even so we also shall be with the Lord. He shall come again and receive us to Himself. So shall we ever be with the Lord.

Finally, we are brought to know Jesus as a very special and unique kind of High Priest, a Priest which has no end. Jesus lives forever at the right hand of God where He makes intercession for us before the throne of God. The devil would try to lead us into misbelief and doubt regarding the peace we have with God the Father. **Keep looking at Jesus** who endured the cross and has sat down at the right hand of God the Father. **Keep looking at Jesus**, knowing that when we sin, Jesus is there before God as our advocate, as our lawyer. He is urging our acquittal with a case God the Father cannot deny, the merits of Jesus’ holy life and Jesus’ sufferings and death. Jesus wraps this robe of righteousness around us, and we are safe and secure. We have the hope of everlasting life in His name! Our anchor holds for it is firmly implanted in the gospel of a crucified and risen Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans 15:13)