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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
February 25, 2018
2nd Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Romans 5:1-11 Psion: In Gethsemane
Hymns: 149; 158; 367; 173 (242:1-3)

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

Sermon Text: Hebrews 10:19-20

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the
blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which He consecrated
for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh.” (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: Access

When one seeks access it is to be assumed that the access is
desirable. People will go to great lengths to secure access to the
powerful and influential. People make large donations to political
campaigns with the hope of access. Lobbyists in Washington are
trying their best to gain influence for their point of view. To do that
effectively they need access to the right people, the people who
make the laws, or have the power to write or to strike down
regulations. So it is equated in the mind of most that access can be
purchased with money or with favors. For many that method of
gaining access is transferred over to their relationship with God, as
if God needed anything from us. They may consider the sacrifice

that they are making as being key to gaining access with God when it gains them nothing at all before the Lord.

For the Jewish Christians who were the initial recipients of this epistle to the Hebrews the access question was related to the Old Testament sacrifices and feast days and ceremonies as well as the rules and regulations that the Old Testament prescribed even for daily life. The inspired writer's response was to direct their attention away from Old Testament ceremony to Jesus, reminding them that in these last days God has spoken to us by His Son (Hebrews 1:2). So the message that serves as the theme for our Sunday meditation this Lenten season is another exhortation of the inspired writer encouraging us to keep --

**THEME: Looking to Jesus Who Endured the Cross:
He Is Our Access.**

Some insist on --

I. Looking for Heavenly Access from One's Own Merit.

One's salvation comes down to finding the right way to get to heaven and having the key in hand that unlocks the door. It comes down to access! As long as people believe that they are already holding the key that will grant them access in their own merit and worthiness, they will not find the way that leads to eternal life. Looking to oneself instead of Jesus is futile. There is a need for the mirror of the law. There is a need to see the sin that caused the separation between God and man in the first place.

For the Jewish Christians that barrier between God and man was presented symbolically in the temple with a thick, impenetrable curtain that hung between the Holy Place in the temple where the altar was located for burnt offerings, and the Holy of Holies, that inner room representing the presence of God. Only High Priest could enter that room, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement after an offering for sin had been made both for the sins of the people and for the sins of the High Priest. That curtain was thick, as thick as a man's hand is broad, a good solid four inches thick. You couldn't see through it, light couldn't pass through it, and you certainly weren't going to easily tear it. No light of God's glory would be seen by any man as long as the curtain of

separation representing the separation man's sin had created was still in place. Access was limited, very limited indeed. Apart from an appropriate sacrifice it was prohibited. It would not be wished away. It required a higher merit than any normal human could provide.

So it is that our text directs us to find our --

II. Access to Eternal Life through Jesus' Merit.

Hebrews 10:19-20 "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh."

Our text is encouraging us to be bold in our faith, absolutely confident concerning our access to God the Father. We can and will enter the holy presence of God, and the access is granted to us by the blood of Jesus. In calling this veil of sin to mind, the veil that separates sinful man from most holy God, our text tells us that there is a new way through that veil, a living way through that veil, and it is found in the Jesus. He came down to earth to be that perfect sacrifice for sin. He was that perfect sacrifice first because He alone among all people was "*holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.*" (Hebrews 7:26) Yes, Jesus was absolutely sinless and holy.

Secondly, Jesus was that perfect sacrifice for sin because He was also true God, the only begotten Son of God, making His blood shed for us upon the cross priceless, the all sufficient ransom price to redeem all mankind from the curse of sin. A few verses earlier in this tenth chapter of Hebrews this high quality of sacrifice was addressed. We read:

Hebrews 10:11-12,14 "And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹² But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ...¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."

Jesus made **us** perfect by His **one** sacrifice. We are among those who are being sanctified, set apart from this sinful world as God's holy people. Jesus, only Jesus can bring you this access to

heavenly glory and the presence of the most holy God. On the night Jesus was betrayed, on their way out to the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus told the disciples:

John 14:6 “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Jesus is the way to heaven. Jesus and only Jesus can bring us into the Father’s presence. It is all in fulfillment of the promises of God, as Paul reminds us in his epistle to the Galatians, that familiar passage in chapter four:

Galatians 4:4-5 “When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

Yes, Jesus was born under the law. He lived under the law. He fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law, and we have been credited with that righteousness. He came to redeem those who were under the law, and that is us. We were under the law not only in the sense of being required to live according to God’s law, but also living under the curse of the law, for “*the soul who sins shall die.*” (Ezekiel 18:4) Jesus redeemed us, dying in our place as our substitute, restoring us to a familial relationship with God the Father. We are now children of God, not according to creation, but according to adoption, adoption in which God chose us to be His children and provided the way for that to happen in Jesus, We are “*no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.*” (Ephesians 2:19)

Jesus secured **access** for us by His death on the cross. The veil of separation was torn in two from top to bottom the very moment of His death. We have open and free access to God on the basis of that sacrifice even as the miraculous sign of the torn curtain declares. This is the foundation of our hope of heaven. Jesus will come again and receive us to Himself. So “*we shall always be with the Lord.*” (1 Thessalonians 4:17) What a glorious hope!

However, this access to the throne of God is not only reserved for the future for our eternal salvation. This gracious access is ours now and it is a --

III. Continuing Access to God's Grace to Help in Time of Need.

We can be bold and confident in coming to God right now, as we come before Him through the blood of Christ. The Apostle Paul asserted in Romans 8:

Romans 8:35 – 39 “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is as we read in our epistle lesson this morning: “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.” (Romans 5:1-2) Paul taught us that as we face the trials and tribulations of life, we actually become increasing aware of the blessing of this access which Christ secured for us with His blood. Through it all we are blessed with the developing of our Christian character and an ever more certain hope of everlasting life. There is no created thing that can separate us from that love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:39) Nothing! We always have the blessing of access, the reality of access.

Again it was on the night He was betrayed that Jesus taught the disciples about these things, these blessings which He would secure for them with His sufferings and death; which He secured for us with His sufferings and death. We read Jesus words from that night in --

John 16:23-24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. 24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

Yes, all we need do is ask in Jesus’ name, and we shall receive. Of course it is according to God’s will for us. We may ask for things the Father knows would not be a blessing, and as our loving Father He will withhold from us that which would bring us harm. However, when we ask what He has already told us is in agreement with His will; when we ask for pardon for our offenses, when we ask for increased faith, when we ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit, when we ask for the hope of everlasting life, we will receive, and our joy will be full. This comes to us in spite of our sins, in spite of our unworthiness. Yes, we all acknowledge our problem with sin still being present in our lives, but even then that access to the throne of grace is there for us, because it is there for us in Christ. Once again we turn to Paul’s words in Romans chapter eight.

Romans 8:34 “Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

Christ who redeemed us with His death and cleared the way to have access to God the Father preserves that peace, that access, for He who died rose again, and ascended to the right hand of God. This was also according to His human nature; Jesus the Son of Man and the Son of God sits at the God’s right hand, and pleads our cause, presenting the sacrifice He made for us on Calvary as just cause for us to be forgiven, again and again, day after day.

Again in this epistle to the Hebrews we read:

Hebrews 7:25 “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

Save to the uttermost! Save to the UTTERMOST! Isn’t that a grand expression of God’s grace for you? It brings us the confident hope we need now as we struggle with the trials, temptations, and tribulations of this life, we will be saved to the uttermost! And it gives us absolute confidence of hope for the final

outcome that is ours because we look to Jesus who endured the cross so that He is our ACCESS to heavenly glory.

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. (Romans15:13)