

“An Anchor for the Soul: Consider Jesus”

Hebrews 3:1-11

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

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Today we continue our study of the book of Hebrews and so I want to begin by reviewing a little bit about the book. Hebrews was originally written to a small, struggling house church, probably in Rome, made up of Jewish Christians. This tiny little congregation found themselves facing serious persecution from the Romans who didn't trust them. It's ironic that to the Roman way of thinking the Christians were pagans because they refused to worship the Roman gods. You may recall from Acts chapter 19 that after spending two years preaching and teaching in Ephesus that Paul was accused by a silversmith who made silver shrines to the goddess Artemis of leading people away from worshiping the goddess.

The silversmith met with some of the other craftsmen and said, “Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”

But it wasn't just the Romans that this little band of believers had to contend with. They were also persecuted by their fellow Jews who did not follow Jesus. For many years the Jews in Rome were basically left alone. The Romans appreciated things that were old and they recognized that the Jewish religion was very old. But the Christians were another story. They had been kicked out of the synagogue and so they really were on their own. So the writer of the book of Hebrews was concerned that some of the believers would turn their backs on Jesus and return to their old life and so he reminds them over and over again about Jesus.

Our passage this morning begins with the word “therefore.” Rick Warren has said that whenever you see the word “therefore” in the Bible you need to stop and see what it's there for. In this case it points us back to the previous verse, 2:18 which says, “because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus.”

Consider Jesus. Today in our world, in our country, and even in our own community, there are many people who reject Jesus. But I suspect that most of them have never taken the time to explore the matter and decide for themselves who Jesus really is. Instead they form their opinions primarily based on their experience with people who claim to be followers of Jesus. That's you. When people find out that you're a Christian they are watching to see how you act and how you speak. Are you fair and honest when you deal with people? Do you always tell the truth? Do you treat people with love and compassion regardless of their religion or skin color or political views? Most non-believers today have not considered Jesus. But I would add that many people who call themselves Christians don't spend much time considering Jesus either. And that's a problem.

To consider means to think carefully about something, to direct your thoughts toward the thing being considered. It means to study and think. Verse 1, which is directed to believers, to “holy brothers” who “share in a heavenly calling,” tells us to consider Jesus. This is really the primary message of Hebrews. Chapter 2 begins with the command to pay close attention to Jesus – to His words and His actions. Consider Jesus.

One day Jesus was alone with his disciples and he asked them, “Who do people say that I am?” They said that some thought he was Elijah and some thought he was his cousin John the Baptist returned from the dead. But then he

asked them the question that every one of us must answer: “Who do YOU say that I am?”

When we consider Jesus we are thinking about the answer to that question and your answer will affect the rest of your life.

Thankfully, Hebrews 3 gives us part of that answer. “Consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.” Pastor John Piper has said that humans have two needs that are greater than all our other needs. He says that we need to hear from God and we need a way to God. We need to hear from God so that we learn who He is and what He’s like. And we need a way to God because we are separated from Him by sin.

The word apostle literally means one who is sent. In this case an apostle is someone sent by God to bring His message to us. Jesus sent his disciples as apostles to the world to speak on his behalf. But Jesus is the perfect apostle. He brings us a word from God because He IS God. That’s how we know his words are reliable. We have access to the words and actions of Jesus in our Bibles. It’s so important for each of us to be in the Word often because that’s where we hear from God as we study and consider Jesus the true apostle.

Jesus is also called the high priest of our confession. The role of the priest is to go to God on behalf of the people. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8: “Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.” Jesus is the perfect priest because He is fully God but He is also fully human. He took on our human nature, humbling himself. He experienced being hungry and tired just like you and me. He was tempted in the same ways we are. Then, even though he lived a sinless life he took on all our sin. The Bible says he *became* sin and then he experienced the ultimate human situation, he experienced death. But death couldn’t hold the God who created life and Jesus rose again three days later, breaking the power of death over us as well. As both fully human and fully God Jesus is able to go to God the Father for us. We now

have a way to God and are assured of His forgiveness and His help.

Our passage then compares Jesus to Moses. It would be impossible to overestimate the importance of Moses to the Jewish faith. It was Moses who led the people out of slavery in Egypt and through the desert for forty years. It was Moses who brought the law directly from God. I was Moses that God spoke to directly. And it was Moses that gave them the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament that every Jew in Jesus’ time would have memorized.

Verse 3 says, “Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses.” This was an important concept for people who were in danger of returning to the religion of Moses. The reason we’re given that Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses is that Christ is infinitely superior to Moses. This does not detract from the greatness of Moses. But our passage points out the Moses was faithful *in* God’s house as a *servant* but Christ is faithful *over* God’s house as a Son. In other words, Jesus, as the heir, owns the house where Moses serves.

Our passage ends with some consequences of either holding fast to your faith in Jesus or rejecting Him. Verses 7-11 are quoted from Psalm 95, which recounts the rebellion by God’s people during their time in the wilderness. They had witnessed God delivering them miraculously from Egypt, making a way for them to cross the Red Sea and protecting them from the Egyptian army. They had received the blessing of God sending manna and quail for them to eat and had watched water pour out of the rock when Moses struck it with his staff. And their response every time was to complain and even to try to overthrow Moses and return to Egypt. Their biggest problem was unbelief. Complaining is almost always an indication of a lack of trust that God can or will provide. If we hear God’s voice and then harden our hearts, the consequence is that we will go astray in our hearts and not know God’s ways.

On the other hand, as verse 6 tells us, if we hold fast our confidence in Christ as the creator and savior, what we find is that *we* become the house of God. That's the purpose of the church. It's not to build buildings or run programs, it's for us to *be* the house of God – in our relationships with each other and then to invite people who don't know Christ into those

relationships so that they have an opportunity to consider Jesus, the One who speaks to us on behalf of God and speaks to God on our behalf, the perfect apostle and high priest. So I invite *you* to consider Jesus.

Amen