

***(Hebrews 3:1-6 ESV)***

***Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.***

More than likely, everyone in this room will agree with the statement that Jesus is greater than Moses. Great, that is the sermon and we can pray. Actually, we need to remember who the author of the book of Hebrews has in mind as his audience while writing. The group this book is addressed to is Jews that are considering Christianity or recently converted. So, there is much history and tradition which is now being redefined for them. In chapter 1 of Hebrews, we discussed how Jesus was superior to the angels. Then in chapter 2, the author went straight to the top by stating that Jesus Christ is God. Then, it seems a bit odd to follow that up with comparing Jesus to Moses. If Jesus is God, it seems logical Jesus is greater than Moses. Yet, there is a very clear and practical reason for chapter 3 starting with Moses.

Moses was faithful to God as a servant. Moses did what God commanded him to do. Jesus was faithful as the Son. As the Son of God, Jesus was obedient to God the Father all the way to the cross. By going to the cross, Jesus paid the debt for our sin. Jesus took the wrath of God and in exchange, gave us in His righteousness. That is why Jesus is honored and worshipped. Moses was truly an honored man. Moses' name is in the bible over 770 times, depending on the translation. He was dramatically saved as an infant by God's protection and was buried by God Himself when he died at 120 years old. Yet, with all that honor, his glory can not be greater than the one that created him.

Although this is not a big leap of faith for us today in this room as non-Jews to accept that Jesus is greater than Moses, it was something that had to be addressed for the audience to whom this book was written. It does give us a sense of the infinitely elevated view we should have of Jesus. As a great man, Moses was honored, but Jesus is that much more honored. As much more we would honor the maker of the house than the house itself. Because of this elevated view of Jesus as our God, the author urges us to consider Jesus.

John Piper made a statement to his congregation once that gives us a big picture of considering Jesus as verse 1 requests. "And the reason our hope and confidence are firm is not because of ourselves. There are sinners of every kind in this room this morning—sexual sinners, lying sinners, stealing sinners, killing sinners, parent-disobeying sinners. The hope of a heavenly calling does not hang on our righteousness. If it did, we would be hopeless. Our hope and confidence hang on Jesus. This is why verse 1 continues: "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, *consider Jesus*." This is what we are doing this morning. This is what preaching is about. It is what Sunday School is about. It is what small groups are about. Considering Jesus."

So, are you considering Jesus or have you just considered Jesus? Are you thinking that I considered Jesus before, maybe a few years ago. Or maybe you believe you are better than that and have considered Jesus once or twice this year already. Jesus is not a vaccination against hell, you don't get inoculated once and forget about it. I know that many in this room do consider Jesus often, but how often should we be considering Jesus and what exactly does that mean to consider Jesus?

Martin Luther once said "Most necessary it is, therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it unto others (speaking about the gospel of Jesus Christ) , and beat it into their heads continually." This was many years ago. Think of all the things you do everyday that people hundreds of years ago did not have to distract them. No television, no internet, no video games, no malls, no parent/teacher conferences, yet, the gospel still

had to be beat into their heads continually. How much easier is it for us to neglect the gospel. At the tips of our fingertips is an unlimited amount of entertainment instantly.

We heard back in Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. And now again we are told to hold fast to this hope in Jesus Christ. Obviously there is a concern that we can drift away from Jesus.

Many in this room are married and some likely desire to be married at some point. Is it enough to tell your spouse on your wedding day that you love them but never again? Or, what would be the condition of the relationship if you never thought about your spouse again? Further more, what if you thought about things that would actually be displeasing to your spouse? Men, if you never told your wife you loved her, if you did not think about her except for an hour or two a week and if you thought about other women the rest of the week, how long do you think you will be married? Sounds ridiculous doesn't it? The analogy is apparent, but I will state it anyway. If you only consider Jesus for an hour or two a week, how long are you going to stay a part of His house?

***(Hebrews 3:7-11 ESV)***

***Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"***

Again, the author of Hebrews is taking scripture from the book of Pslams. In this verse, he is taking Pslam 95 which was written by David, but clearly states that it is a direct statement from the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit advises you to do or not do something, it would be best to take the advice. I heard someone say this week that you can not hear the gospel without your heart being changed. You can accept what you hear and your heart will become flesh. Or you can rebel what you are hearing and your heart

will harden like stone.

Although you may not like it, this passage tells us that we will be tested. We live in a broken world, so many days may be testing for us. Getting out of bed this morning might have been a test for a few of you. We know from last week in Hebrews 2 that Jesus was tested and that He was faithful and obedient all the way to the cross. It is easy for us to profess our love for Jesus. I recently saw a truckers hat that said “ I heart Jesus”. You can buy a t-shirt claiming that Jesus is your homeboy at the mall. Ninety percent of gangster rappers that win music awards give thanks to Jesus before anyone else, but professing love is easy.

The scripture is clear that it is not our mouths which God is concerned primarily about. It is in our heart were we will stray. Most of the time, it will be a head, heart, hands. We hear the gospel and understand it with our heads. From there we have to truly accept and believe it with our hearts. If we profess and believe with our head and our heart, our response will be with our hands most often. Yet, it is possible to know with our head and even do good works with our hands, but if our heart is not regenerated, scripture tells us that we will not find rest in God.

***(Hebrews 3:12-15 ESV)***

***Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”***

When I read this verse, I immediately thing of my good college friend Eric Inman. Two things that my friend believed in university was that if you are not reading from Old King James Vesion, it is not worth reading and secondly is backsliding. He firmly believed that you could be completely and truly secured in your salvation one day and damned to hell the next. Eric, although a friend, was wrong often. **1 John 2:19 sheds some**

**additional light on this verse: They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.** If you walk away from God forever, it is clear that your heart was never truly believing. It is that unbelief in your heart that causes you to fall away from the living God. And since only God knows each and everyone of our hearts, we have to encourage each other daily. Even though my wife knows me better than anyone else on this earth, she still can not be certain of my heart. She can hear me profess the gospel with my mouth and she can see the fruits of what I do with my hands, but even she could not judge my heart, only God can do that. It is for that exact reason that she encourages me daily in the gospel. Notice that the scripture says every as long as it is called “today”, notice that means everyday, not just Sunday.

Community is not just a popular word being used by churches today, even though every church is using it today. You can not have community one day a week. It is like a one day diet. If you eat healthy one day a week, but then eat pizza, milkshakes, Reeses’ Peanut Butter Cup Blizzards with extra peanut butter cup , cheeseburgers and french fries the other 6 days, you will not be healthy. If we claim to have community by meeting only one day a week as the church, we too will be unhealthy and will not be a community. Church community should be exactly the same as family. What do you do as a family? That is what we as the church should be doing together. If there is a need in the church family, we should take care of that need. When my son needs new shoes, I don’t leave him on his own to buy shoes. As a 6 year old, that is some need he can’t meet on his own, but it is a need I can meet, so I take care of that need.

When there is a birth in our church community, we should all celebrate and be joyful. As well, we should bless that family as if it were our own. Taking meals to the family, offering to watch the baby so a mom can get a few hours of sleep during the day, go clean the house or just drop off some diapers from time to time. It is not hard stuff, but it is the daily stuff that we do together that makes up community. Many times, it is doing things we already do. How many meals a week do you eat? Most of us eat quite a few times. How many of those times are you eating with another person or

another family?

Attending one event a week together will not make us community, if we want to encourage each other daily in community, we will have to share life together.

True community in the church is not an event and it is not something you can simply add to your already too busy schedule. It has to be all encompassing part of life. If it simply another thing to add to your to do list, community will not happen and it will not be attractive to others. Yet, when people see the joy and love we have spending time with and for each other, the world will want to know what we have, because they are desperately longing for community.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was a German pastor executed for his resistance against Hitler and the Nazis, stated: "The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer." Do you see your brothers and sisters in Christ as an incomparable joy? Do they give you strength? If not, the problem is likely not them. If you are not longing to share life together, it is not only sad, it is highly dangerous.

This is critical to protect one another against the deceitfulness of sin. We live in a world that is constantly telling us lies that will harden our hearts against the gospel. Even within the church, there are movements that are teaching against the authority of God's word. There are churches splitting over sinful issues such as homosexuality. There are very fast growing churches through North America that teach God wants you to be rich and preach self affirmation instead of preaching the gospel. The world is full of lies that blatantly go against the very spirit of scripture. We have to encourage each other daily if we want to continue to desire the things that God desires instead of what the world desires.

Again, there is a plea to resist neglecting this salvation if you hear His voice today. I find it very interesting that the author uses the word today. None of us are guaranteed any more time than right now. Everyday, we hear of tragedy. We all know this life is just a vapor, so time is always

against those that do not believe. If you hear the voice today, don't harden your heart like the rebellion. The remaining verses for today discuss this rebellion.

***(Hebrews 3:16-19 ESV)***

***For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.***

It is simply astounding to think of all that the Israelites would have seen. Moses states that he is going to lead his people out of Egypt, out of the slavery of the Pharaoh. Egypt has enslaved the Israelites for over 400 years and now the man who was saved from the river as a baby is going to lead a group of nearly 2 million people out of Egypt into the desert. In order to do this, God brings down many devastating plagues on Egypt until the Israelites are allowed to leave. Once outside of Egypt, the Israelites realize that the Egyptian army is now chasing them because the Pharaoh changed his mind. In order to escape, God allows Moses to part the Red Sea. Realizes this parting was likely a minimum of 16 miles in length. Not only does Moses part the Sea, but when the 2 million Israelites cross the dry land, it immediately closes back up to kill their pursuers. All the while, God led the Israelites by a cloud during the day and fire by night. Then, God rains down food from the sky. God gives the people manna to eat and then allows Moses to strike a rock with his staff which caused water to rush out, which the people could drink.

After all this, the people still grumbled to Moses, wanting to go back to Egypt and even worship idols created by their own hands. So, God did not allow them to enter into the promise land and allowed them to die in the wilderness because of their unbelief.

This is huge so I will say that again. The Israelites were not allowed to enter the promise land and the rest in God, because of their disbelief.

If the Israelites could witness everything that happened before, during and after their escape from Egypt and still have unbelief, how much more do we have to fight against unbelief today? We easily can see that world we live in can be seen as a wilderness. And just like the Israelites, the one thing that will keep people from the rest in God is unbelief.

This illustration of Israel in the wilderness should be a warning to us all, Christians and non-Christians. If we are hearing these words right now, we know with our head the gospel, but are we going to let it harden our hearts or soften our hearts? Are we going to be satisfied with Jesus in this life when things get hard? This is worth thinking about now. The story of Job can be a great reminder for us all. When things were great for Job, it was real easy for him to worship God. But when things started going wrong, temptation to give up God and return to our sinful ways start to lurk in our heads. For Job, he lost everything. His family, his livelihood, yet stayed faithfully obedient to God. When your life starts to get hard or you hit a rough patch in life, which will happen to all of us, are you going to be faithfully obedient. If you have your heart set on Jesus, you will be able to be obedient.

But simply professing to believe in Jesus for the “get out of hell” card will not be enough for you to rely fully on Jesus. If you have only professed with your mouth because you heard Jesus can save you from sins and you thought it was simply a way to go to heaven, you need to reconsider your belief. Because if that is you or if you never made a decision with your heart, you can make that decision right now. Do you believe?

## **COMMUNION**

### **Luke 22:15-20**

**And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” And he took bread, and when he had given**



**thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.**

The beginning is good. But is only the finish that matters. When I was in Grade 8, I was on the track team. Basically, my basketball coach forced to be on the track team as he thought it was good conditioning for me for basketball. I was assigned to run the mile. I had a strategy in my running. I would take it easy for the first 3 laps around the track and then on the 4th and final lap, I would use all the energy I had left to finish strong. Most of the time, I would pass multiple people on the last lap. Although I never won any races, I enjoyed finishing strong. If you make a profession today or have made a profession in the past, that is good. But, it only matters if you hear the words “well done good and faithful servant” on the last day. That is why the author of Hebrews is encouraging us to share life together in community so that together we will finish the race strong.