

Hebrews 2:1-13
“Tethered to Christ”
24th Sunday af. Pentecost

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Pastor Hartwig
November 8, 2015

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ –

[*Introduction*] Let me paint the picture...

Frost glistens in the light as it melts from the backs of wooly lambs,
gleaming and shimmering and dripping as the animals doze.

The lambs rise to stretch. They shiver, steam wafting from their warm legs and bellies.

They look up expectantly toward a man standing near their gate.

He leans on the edge of the pen and looks the herd over carefully,
wondering which lambs to feed and which to choose for the morning sacrifice.

It is a great and festive day—most holy.

And yet, tomorrow ... he will have to choose again, ...and so the next day, and the next.

This was the Levitical, sacrificial system!

The writer to the Hebrews describes the glories of the old covenant
but also reminds his readers of how it is surpassed by the glories of the new covenant.

The cycle of sacrifice reached its consummation in one most holy offering
—the blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all our sins.

Jesus now stands as our High Priest,
watching over the sheepfold of all who look to Him,
the founder and perfecter of our faith.

The author of Hebrews is doctrinal and practical in his message. His first task is to share the supreme treasure we have in Christ, both in his person and priesthood, and he makes it clear that Christ is superior to angels, to Moses. He is superior as the perfect revelation of God.

In the midst of documenting the supremacy of Christ as the final revelation of God
and at that, one far superior to the angels...,
He stops in pastoral concern to warn his readers.

"We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard,"
he tells them, ***"so that we do not drift away."***

[***The Cape of Good Hope***] At the southern tip of Africa, a cape jutting out into the ocean
once caused sailors great anxiety.

Many who attempted to sail around it were lost in the swirling seas.

Because adverse weather conditions so often prevailed there,
the region was named the Cape of Storms.

A Portuguese captain determined to find a safe route through those treacherous waters so
his countrymen could reach the riches of the East Indies. He wanted to reach those
distant ports in safety. He succeeded, and the area was renamed the Cape of Good Hope.

We all face a great storm called death.

But our Lord has already traveled through it safely
and has provided a way for us to do the same.

By His crucifixion and resurrection, Christ abolished eternal death for every believer and
has permanently established our fellowship with Him in heaven.

Although this "last enemy," physical death, can touch us temporarily, its brief control
over our earthly body will end at the resurrection. The sting of death has been removed!

Now all who know Christ as Savior can face life's voyage with confidence. Even though
the sea may be rough, we will experience no terror as we pass through the "cape of good
hope" and sail into heaven's harbor.

The Master Helmsman Himself has assured our safe passage.

[***This Life***] As we live out the rest of our sanctified life, ***"We must pay more careful
attention, therefore, to what we have heard,"*** he tells them, ***"so that we do not drift
away."***

[***Warning***] Both terms take us down to the sea.

"Drift away" reminds us of a ship that is drifting past, instead of into the safety of the harbor. Some wayward wind is carrying it slowly, almost unnoticed, past its destination.	"Pay more careful attention" reminds us of sailors sweating and straining, sparing no effort to keep their ship safely on the correct course.
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This was no idle concern on the part of the author.

The drifting past the harbor had already begun for those Jewish Christians.

The winds of persecution and oppression were carrying them farther out to sea and off course. Someone had to shout out to them, to warn them to head back on course.

Then, as now, drifting away from God and His Word can be such a slow, unnoticed process. Like some tire with a leaky valve, faith can lose its air little by little till it is completely flat.

So the author warned them strongly, reinforcing his warning with a searching question.

All of those Jewish readers knew how serious God's Law was. Even the giving of the law showed its seriousness.

- God himself spoke it (Exodus 20:1),
- writing it on two tablets of stone (Deuteronomy 5:22), u
- sing ANGELS in some way to transmit it (Galatians 3:19),
- and binding everyone to it.

Everyone who violated the law by stepping over it in thought, word, or deed and everyone who disobeyed it by being unwilling to hear it ... would be justly punished.

No sin of commission or omission would go unpunished by a fair and impartial God. If that was how God felt about the law,

the author argues going from the lesser to the greater,

then "how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?"

And so we are warned! **We are warned to not drift away.**

[***Tethering***] Not in Africa, but Australia:

A Sydney Ferry came close to drifting into the sea wall near the Opera House after a mechanical failure.

You see, the Queenscliff had a problem with its clutch and lost power close to the iconic building. Passengers said that they became worried that the ferry would hit the sea wall. They said ferry staff began yelling at people in a nearby cafe to get out of the way.

"Some were saying sit down, people were yelling on the shore saying 'guys everybody has to move,'" a witness said.

"Then another jet boat came around and all of the people having their lunch started to run - it was hilarious. Well it wasn't hilarious, but it was close."

The Captain dropped anchor and about 20 minutes later the ship was guided into port by a tugboat. A tugboat is a boat that maneuvers vessels by pushing or towing them. A boat is tethered to the tugboat.

[Solution] So if we are not to drift away, then to whom do we tether? Jesus...

The author uses the human name "*Jesus*" to remind us of how God became a man like us.

Our Lord did not sit in some remote throne room in heaven,
watching and sadly shaking his head at our feeble, futile efforts.
Instead, he himself came down to earth and took on our human nature.

What a sight that must have been for the angels – as their Lord stepped down from his eternal glory to be wrapped in human flesh and made a little lower than they.

All this "*so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*"
Jesus became man to die for man.

“To taste death” is more than merely to sip at that dread cup. It is to drain it completely, to experience it fully. And this he did “for everyone,” the author writes, using the singular so that all can say, “He died for me.”

Then let it be known that this plan of salvation was no haphazard happening. It began in the heart and the mind of an eternal God "*for whom and through whom everything exists.*" God, for whose glory and by whose hand all exists, allows nothing — certainly not the plan of salvation — to occur by accident.

A just and holy God did not bring men to heaven's glory by ignoring their sins, but rather by dealing with them. This he did by sending his Son to be the "author of their salvation."

This son declares God's name to us, his brothers. Not only did he show us what his Father was like; he also joins us in singing psalms and praises to God.

Look at Christ's life on earth, listen to his prayers, and note his complete dependence on God. Even when dying, it was, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46).

We marvel at a love that would make Christ our brother.
And so we tether ourselves to Christ and we let our worries drift away... Amen!

Let us sing a joyful noise unto the Lord. Amen!