

September 11, 2016 “Where Is God (in my world)?” Hebrews
10:19-25

The last time that we were together, we began this new series. The theme of my message the last Sunday in August was God Is Our Father. And the point of that message was very simple. God is not our Father in the sense of earthly fathers. HE is not a man, or a human like father. He is our Father in the Biblical sense of that phrase. HE created all that is. He created us. And HE is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, uniquely so, as the One true God. And that we have the right to call God our Father because Jesus said, Pray like this when you pray. Begin by saying “Our Father”. In other words, God's being our Father can never be separated from the first fact, that HE is God. Human comparisons break down. He makes no mistakes. His first priority is saving us from sin and thereby creating with us a bond as HIS sons and daughters that is unlike the bonds we have with our parents who are (like us), all too human.

A second question that flows out of that reality is this. Where is God in that we do not see HIM as we see our parents, our relatives and friends. The experience we have of God is different from any other relationship in our lives. It is not based on being able to touch, taste, smell or hear. It begins and to some degree it ends, unfolding in its entirety on the basis of the human ability to believe. We know God by faith and by no other means. Which is why our skeptical friends, can have so much fun, making fun of the fact that we believe. They ask us to think! And they are unable to grasp or bridge the gap, that it is precisely because we think...that we have chosen to believe.

So, in answering the question, “Where is God (in my

2.

world) I find myself testifying more than anything else. I wind up sharing what I believe, based on all of the experiences I have had. And one experience in particular. Where is God (in my world)? I am going to work my answer out of the verses I read to you from Hebrews 10:19-25. And I do so because I want you to see, my experience parallels the experience of other Christians, that is, disciples of Jesus. For over 2,000 years believers in Christ have been saying these things. In other words, in spite of all my thinking about this, my experience is typical of those who follow the One who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Paul is the author of the letter to the Hebrews as far as I am concerned. One of the fads in Theological study is to question the authorship of the letter because we do not have a document saying, "I Paul wrote this one too." What I acknowledge is this. For 2,000 years the disciples of Jesus have believed, because nowhere in that line of time has there been reason to question Paul's being the author. And it is not true, that the church as a superpower told people what to believe or else. St. Augustine was not a theological lightweight. The Reformers were not simple guys who did not think on their own.

I'll say it again. They had not reason to refute the tradition of Paul's being the author, and they wrote, taught and preached from this letter presuming Paul's having written it. I will say one more thing and I will drop this point. Who the author was does not change a thing, about what we have in our hands here in Hebrews chapter 10.

Where is God (in my world)? Here is where the answer to that question begins. "We have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus." Here is what those words really mean. We do get close to God, and I mean really close. The words

3.

compare our experience as believers in Jesus to that of the High Priest in Jerusalem's Temple, passing through the curtain into the holiest place in the Temple in Jerusalem to stand in the very presence of God who is our Father. And what this verse reminds us about, is that that experience occurs in one way and one way only. Where is God (in my world, and your world)? He is close by. The experience is intense. And it begins and ends with the shed blood of Christ on the cross. Perhaps this is a better way of saying the same thing.

Because I believe that Jesus saved me from my sin by dying on the cross and rising the 3rd day, I see God everywhere, and in everything, and all the time. And know this “seeing” is not like standing before my father, Bill Mitchell, looking into his tender loving eyes. It is the experience of being in the presence of my Father who is God. And yes it is a faith experience. And yes it is linked always to the belief on my part that sin is real, and I am a sinner, and Jesus saved me from sin by dying on the cross and rising the 3rd day. In other words, because I believe in Jesus as my Saviour and Lord, I see God everywhere, and in everything and all the time.

But that is not the last word. Here in Hebrews 10, I am skipping across the mountain peaks of the teaching. My perception that God loves me is based on the decision I made and continue to make to believe. I am saved from my sinfulness by the blood of Jesus. And the next mountain peak is in the 22nd verse. “Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.” In other words this is not about glib expressions of belief. I am judging no one when I say this. The point of the word is that when belief in the saving Lordship of Jesus, crucified and risen is part of the equation, we enter into a relationship which is close to, near to, the Lord our God. How do you know your faith is sincere? That is a marvelously

easy question to answer. If your faith in Jesus influences what you do and how you do what you do, influences where you go and how you go where you go, spills over into the key relationships of everyday living...it is sincere.

Where is God in my world? He was there when I got the phone call saying that Madeline McIntosh had passed away. HE was in me and at my side when I committed to lead that memorial service on Thursday, to spend the time I spent in prayer over and with the McIntosh family. And while you might say...well that's just doing what a minister does...anyone who gave a thought to the McIntosh family in their grief or said something or did something to express concern...did every bit as much as I did, and maybe, maybe, even more. God is present when we sincerely act based on our faith, touching the lives of others. That is where God is in my world.

Where is God in my world? The next mountain peak is in the 23rd verse. "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for HE who promised, is faithful." As a teenager, it was obvious to me, that sin is real. It was obvious that sin is the chaos factor in life. Because of sin, some of it mine, people get hurt, get wounded and even die. I did not want to die. I did not want to contribute to the sin pool in the world...not knowingly...(that is a confession that perfection alluded me then as it alludes me now by the way)...so on the basis of what I understood of the Biblical word...I put my faith in Jesus. I pursued eternal life through faith in the power of the shed blood of Christ.

Our ability to believe, gets challenged all the time. Doubts haunt us all the time. That is reality. And that reality leads to this reality. Every time we realize, we know, or we understand our

faith is being challenged and we resolve to stand steadfast at the foot of the cross, we, you and I, experience being in the presence of God who is our Father. Through the saving work of Jesus, the Son of the living God.

We are skipping across mountain peaks and the next one is in verse 25. “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing...” Is that about attending church services? Yes it is. Part of the answer to the question, “Where is God (in my world)? Finds answer in the simple shared experience of worship. Worship is that basic, and that important. If we give up on the shared experience of prayer, praise, and the experience of the word and sacraments...I will guarantee you it will become harder to see God as involved in your world or mine. That's why when I was too ill to lead worship, I came and sat among you in worship. We need this gathering together. Disciples of Jesus have always needed the shared experience of meeting together. Don't give up on it. You will be more aware of God's presence as a result.

One final point. It is also in that 25th verse. Where is God (in my world)? It says, “Let us not give up meeting together...but let us encourage one another.” We are not here just for the purpose of getting something for ourselves. In fact this is one of the laws of the grace of God. If you really want blessing from God who is your Father...be here primarily for others. That is the ultimate act of love...doing things not for your own benefit but for others. That was the motivation behind Thomas a Kempis writing his classic little volume “The Imitation of Christ”. Jesus was here on earth for others. God is here among us, and with us as we face the challenges presented by each day because He loves you and wants you to live, to live and live, eternally alive. Where is God in my world? I see

6.

HIM every time I see the gathered church doing things for one another's benefit...the shared experience of worship and work. And doing things for others outside the circle.

God dwells in my world. God saves in my world. God my Father transforms people through the shed blood of Christ in my world. Do you know what that chorus we sang earlier really means? Love lifted me? It means I saw heaven come down and touch the earth when I let the love of Jesus touch me deeply. Because God is my Father. And this world is not my world...just like me, it is HIS.

Let us pray;

Lord continually remind us the most important fact of faith is that we are saved by the shed blood of Jesus, your Son, and that faith opens our eyes to that truth. Make our faith passionate. Lead us through the roughest parts of life by your HOLY SPIRIT. Help us to keep our eyes on the prize through the fact of coming together to be your body, the church. Make us mindful that we all have needs, and grant that we may be thinking and doing mindful of the needs of others, today and always. Amen