

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

OCT 31 - NOV 4, 2022

Hebrews 11-13

LIVING BY

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Sermon Series

Oct 2 - Nov 20

MONDAY

Read **Hebrews 12:14-17**

Glimpses of Holiness

The writer of Hebrews shifts focus from the benefits of God's discipline to a two-fold command: "*Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy*" (v. 14). At first glance, it may not be obvious how peaceful living and holiness relate to one another. Peaceful living seems to focus on our relationships with other people whereas holiness focuses on living in right relationship with God.

But the notion of right relationships is what links the two. Peace, or *shalom* in Hebrew, is much more than the absence of conflict. It is holistic wellbeing that derives from being in right relationship with God and others. To be holy is to be *set apart* from others. In this context, the author seems to suggest that God expects His followers to be set apart to Him, in a right relationship with Him, which has clear implications for their relationships with others.

The next warning may seem somewhat puzzling without the context of the Hebrew Scriptures. The author writes, "*See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many*" (v. 15). This exhortation likely alludes to Moses' exhortation to Israel in Deuteronomy 29:18: "*Make sure there is no man*

or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.”

The *bitter root* to which the author of Hebrews refers is the root of disbelief and idolatry, which posed as much a threat in the first century AD and in the days of Moses as it does today. The writer also calls out Esau, who so devalued his birthright that he traded it to his brother, Jacob, for a meal.

Holiness, the author reminds us, is essential for “*seeing the Lord*” (v. 14). A life transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit so that we live in right relationship with God and others is not only a possibility but God’s expectation of His children.

QUESTIONS

How committed are you to living a holy life and living in peace with everyone? With which habits or people do you stumble? How can you obtain the grace you need?

PRAYERS

For Stephen & Kate Clark (Campus2Campus Ministries)

Please pray for this Campus2Campus team of 14 to be unified in heart and spirit.

TUESDAY

Read **Hebrews 12:18-21; Exodus 19:9-22**

The Terrifying Awesomeness of God

The writer of Hebrews reminds the readers of the greatest demonstration of God's holiness, when He appeared to Israel at Mt. Sinai. This incident is recorded for us in Exodus 19:16-19:

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

The writer of Hebrews notes that the readers have not witnessed such a demonstration of God's holiness. But the fact that they were not among those who witnessed God's appearance at Mt. Sinai does not in any way diminish the holy terror that Israel experienced. Imagine, for a moment, being camped at the base of Mt San Antonio (aka Mt. Baldy) with all the people who live in San Gabriel Valley (San Dimas to South Pasadena to Monterey Park to Whittier to Diamond Bar and

everything in between) with the mountain covered in a thick cloud, complete with thunder, lightning, smoke, fire, and earthquakes, along with a mysterious trumpet blast growing louder and louder. It is no wonder that everyone in the camp trembled. The appearance of God to deliver His law to Moses was a terrifying, awesome, holy event.

When the Israelites heard God speaking from the mountain, they found it too much to handle: *“When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, ‘Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die’”* (Exodus 20:18-19). Such was the awesome experience of being present (even at a “safe” distance) when God showed up for His people.

QUESTIONS

When have you most experienced the terrifying awesomeness of God? How do you perceive and respond to His holiness in your daily life?

PRAYERS

For Stephen & Kate Clark (Campus2Campus Ministries)

Pray for spiritual, mental, and physical health of this Campus2Campus ministry team.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Hebrews 12:22-24**

Holy Grace

Yesterday's text focused on what the readers had NOT experienced: the awesome, terrifying display of God's holy presence that Israel experienced at Mt. Sinai. The writer of Hebrews contrasts this image of God's holiness to a much more inviting and welcoming image of God's presence. This description begins with three synonymous terms: "*You have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*" (v. 22). While each of these terms has different connotations, they all point to the place where God makes His home.

Notice the contrast with the previous verses. In the prior description of God's display of His presence at Mt. Sinai, God came to His people to reveal His glory and holiness to them. In this text, believers are traveling to God's permanent address.

This is further evidenced in the following description of those who also occupy this space: "*You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven*" (vv. 22-23). The writer envisions the readers as on a journey with heaven as their certain destination.

Of course, angels and believers are not the primary focus of this destination. The primary focus is found in the next sentence: “*You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel*” (vv. 23-24). The three figures in this sentence underscore the writer’s focus on holy grace. First, this is the place of God, the Judge of all. Just like His appearance at Mt. Sinai, God’s place is where His holy judgment is on display.

The second figure, “*the spirits of the righteous made perfect,*” speaks of those who have been transformed from a state of sinfulness to righteousness and perfection in God’s presence.

Finally, the writer mentions the means by which this transformation is possible: “*to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood ...*” The fact that Jesus’ blood “*speaks a better word than the blood of Abel*” emphasizes the effectiveness of Jesus’ death in providing salvation for all who believe. What holy and amazing grace!

QUESTIONS

Are you on the same journey as the readers of Hebrews? How does such a destination affect the way you live now?

PRAYERS

For Stephen & Kate Clark (Campus2Campus Ministries)

Pray for the parents-to-be, Kate and Stephen, as they are expecting a baby in November.

THURSDAY

Read **Hebrews 12:25-27**

The Call to Respond to God's Holiness

Having drawn the contrast between God's former revelation of His holiness at Mt. Sinai and the readers' anticipation of a future experience of God's holiness in heaven, the author now exhorts the readers to respond appropriately. The fundamental exhortation is simple: "*See to it that you do not refuse Him who speaks*" (v. 25). Arguing from the lesser to the greater, the writer suggests that if the Israelites who refused to obey God did not escape His judgment, how much less should the readers expect to escape God's judgment if they refuse to listen to God.

The Israelites heard God speak from Mt. Sinai when He revealed the Ten Commandments. But per yesterday's text, Jesus' sprinkled blood speaks even more clearly and universally than God had spoken at Mt. Sinai. The contrast between these two events of revelation could not be sharper: God spoke to Israel on earth, but now He speaks from heaven; God spoke to the nation of Israel, but Jesus' shed blood speaks to all; God spoke a word of warning at Mt. Sinai, but Jesus' blood speaks a word of grace.

The writer of Hebrews assures the readers of God's seriousness by quoting the promise God gave through Haggai the prophet,

“Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens” (Hebrews 12:26; Haggai 2:6). The God who spoke at Mt. Sinai and caused the mountain to shake is the same God who now speaks from heaven, figuratively shaking heaven and earth.

Given such a better word from God, how dare we refuse to listen and obey? What possible excuse can we offer for disobedience? “Jesus, I didn’t understand what you meant by saying there are two great commandments, to love God and to love others.” Really? “God, I don’t know how to act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with you.” We don’t? If we, who have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus poured out for us on the cross, make such pathetic excuses for not obeying God, how can we expect to escape God’s judgment?

QUESTIONS

How obediently do we listen to God? What excuses do we make for not taking God’s holiness more seriously? How will we prioritize living a holy life this week?

PRAYERS

For Stephen & Kate Clark (Campus2Campus Ministries)

Pray for the very large people group whom the Clarks live amongst to come to faith!

FRIDAY

Read **Hebrews 12:28-29**

Worshipping a Consuming Fire

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that even though God has promised to shake earth and heaven, He has reserved for His followers a “*kingdom that cannot be shaken*” (v. 28). God’s kingdom is solidly built; it has permanence; it is as secure as God Himself. Although the term “kingdom of God” often evokes images of a physical realm where God rules, it is best understood as a metaphor for God’s presence. God’s kingdom cannot be shaken because God Himself cannot be shaken. God is secure, God is certain, God is unwavering.

The unshakeable presence of God should evoke several responses from us. The first response is thankfulness. We can be thankful that our God is not subject to the changes of life circumstances that we all face. His will is neither arbitrary nor fickle. Rather, it is consistent with His good, holy, and gracious character. For that, we should be thankful each day. As Jeremiah the prophet reminds us, “*Because of the Lord’s great love, we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness*” (Lamentations 3:22-23). We can be thankful that God is faithful.

The second response God’s unshakeable presence should evoke is wor-

shipping God “acceptably with reverence and awe” (v. 28). One definition of worship is simply that worship is our response to God informed by awe. Reverence and awe are the only acceptable responses to God’s awesome holiness. Awe is essentially a profound sense of wonder. Perhaps the best way to describe the appropriate attitude toward God is to say we should be wonderstruck, gladly following God’s will for our lives.

The final affirmation that “our God is a consuming fire” (v. 29) is a quote from Deuteronomy 4:24 where Moses was recounting for Israel God’s revelation of Himself at Mt. Sinai. It is a reminder to us that while God is our Father, He is not our “Old Man”; while His words to us are often gracious, His commands are to be taken seriously; and while He is aware of our weaknesses, He never accepts them as excuses. Our God is a wholly holy and gracious God, who desires to be worshiped by His wonderstruck followers.

QUESTIONS

What qualities of God fill you with the greatest sense of wonder?

What does “worshipping God with reverence and awe” look like for you?

PRAYERS

For Stephen & Kate Clark (Campus2Campus Ministries)

Pray for this ministry’s strategy development as the team is planting new communities in the city.



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