

Jesus the Once and Future King

Sermon Series on Hebrews

Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

April 23, 2017

TEXT: Hebrews 10:26-39

We turn our attention to the book of Hebrews where we have been this spring. We are journeying together through this majestic portion of God's Word. We stand this morning on the



other side of the empty tomb as we fix our eyes on Jesus, as we been seeking to do all spring, that Jesus is God's one and only Son, the true humanity. He is the giver of rest, the source of eternal salvation. Jesus is our permanent priest; He is the mediator of the New Covenant; He has sacrificed Himself for our sins; and last Sunday, Easter, we celebrated

that He is the new and living way. I know for many of us, Easter often feels like something we prepare for—we build up and then we fall off the cliff on the other side. There is actually a term for this Sunday. It is often called “low Sunday.” It is called “low Sunday,” not because there's a big spike of attendance on Easter; it's called “low Sunday” because where do you go from the mountain of the empty tomb? That is actually a totally wrong name for this Sunday. This is not a low Sunday; this is actually life beginning to be lived-out on the other side of the accomplishment of the cross. I don't know if you have used the term “low Sunday,” but I don't like to call it that because actually new life has begun. When we think this week about Jesus and after His resurrection, He spoke to us about not just how we are to live, but what we are to do in this world.

I know our attention is in Hebrews 10 this morning, but I want to remind you of what Jesus speaks to us as His followers at the ending of the Gospels. In Matthew, after His resurrection Jesus gathers with the disciples in Galilee and tells them to “*go into all the earth and make disciples of all nations.*” Jesus says: “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.*” At the ending of Mark's gospel, Jesus says to us: “*Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.*” In other words, something has happened on Good Friday and Easter Sunday that has changed this whole world and there is good news for all the earth. Luke's gospel ends with Jesus speaking to downcast disciples on the road to Emmaus. He opens their minds to understand the Scriptures and tells them that He had to suffer and the third day be

raised from the dead. Then Jesus said in Luke 24:47-48:

“ . . .repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Easter Sunday is a mountaintop, but it is followed in Scripture by a sending out. John's gospel's last imperative is simply Jesus' summons to “follow Me.” I love the very ending of John's gospel. John peeks in, as it were, and says in John 21:25:

“Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

That is a staggering image, isn't it? Do you believe that Jesus is active in the world today, that He is moving now, and that Good Friday and Easter are actually the launching of God's great project of redemption? I love to follow Christ's work in the world.

One of the ways I do that is by being Facebook friends with God's servants throughout the world. In a way it redeems Facebook for me to have my time there be focused on God's activity. I want to share with you, just as we enter into Hebrews 10, what my dear friend Darren shared just yesterday, and this is a picture of Jesus' work in the world. He writes that a family was crossing the sea to Greece by boat from Turkey. Their small daughter fell off of the edge. They looked around, and they didn't see her anywhere. Fearing that they had lost her, suddenly they looked, and there she was, dry on the other side of the boat. She kept repeating that a man dressed in white, walking on the water, had picked her up and put her back into the boat, and they thought she was crazy. They landed on the island of Lesbos, and when they got there, a Christian man greeted them. He said he was a Christian, and began to share the gospel with them. The way that he shared the gospel with them was by telling them the story of a God who could walk on the water. The whole family started crying and told them about their daughter. The man said: “I've never shared the gospel through that story before, but I just felt led that day to do that.” They all became Christians, and that was yesterday! That is the God we are serving. As we hear His Word, we do not come to a great figure of history; we do not come to someone that we have grown up knowing and have nothing more to learn of. We come to the living Jesus Christ who summons us to follow Him into the world.

Last Sunday, at the end of Hebrews 10, the glorious picture of the new and living way ended with the exhortations for us to: draw near to God; come close to Him and worship; hold to our confession of hope in Him; and consider how to stir one another up to love and good deeds—the benefactions of knowing Christ. This morning, we want to follow Hebrews 10 in the passage that we read together to a final ending of this great, central section of Hebrews. The final section has two paragraphs. The first is a warning, that theological 2' x 4' that I mentioned several weeks ago. It is a stark warning to get our attention of the importance of paying close

attention. Then the chapter ends with a stirring exhortation. So, let's follow together both the warning and the exhortation.

Sometimes people trust Christ because they fear judgment, and that's a real way of being motivated and spurred into the Kingdom. Other people are brought into the Kingdom because they are overwhelmed by the love of Christ that they see. Both of these are valid ways, but we need to hear the warning well and receive the word of exhortation, so keep your Bibles open to Hebrews 10 and we will start at Hebrews 10:26, which begins by saying:

"For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins."

That is, after learning of Christ and receiving the news of His once-for-all-time sacrifice, if we act as though that is irrelevant or has had no effect on our lives, if we just keep going with business as usual, the writer says there is no longer a sacrifice for sins. In other words, there will not be another coming of Christ to deal with sin. What he's saying is not the case of someone who trusts Christ and sins again. That is not the image. The image is someone who has been informed of Christ and then willfully turns away from that, and he puts a stake in the ground to say there is no provision for our forgiveness even the once-for-all-time sacrifice of Christ. If we walk away from Christ, Hebrews 10:27 says there is only a *"fearful expectation of judgment, a fury of fire that will consume God's adversaries."* That is very strong language. In Hebrews 10:28, the writer says on the analogy from Scripture:

"Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses."

He says this is true for anyone who sets aside, who abrogates, who rejects, who counts as unbinding and not applicable to my life, anyone who sets aside the law of Moses. This is the biblical image: God is just and fair. No one is condemned by just one voice. Deuteronomy 17 says on the evidence of two or three witnesses a person is condemned. Deuteronomy 19:15 says:

". . . on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed."

Our Lord Jesus uses the same structure and instruction for us in Matthew 18:16 when He says:

"But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed."

When we utterly disregard God's Word, the writer says God brings judgment against that, and he says in another analogy of that in Hebrews 10:29, if that's the case:

"How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?"

How much more—literally, how much worse off do you think we will be? This is the dark side of a *Qal va-homer*, if you will. If you have been around for a while, this is another *Qal va-homer*. I know some you think I'm over the top with this, but there are just dozens and dozens of these in the New Testament. It is the most frequent way of thinking found in Scripture. It's the analogy that if God acts this way, if this is true, then how much more is this other point true. If it is the case that when you abrogate God's Word He brings judgment, if that is true, the writer of Hebrews says: "How much worse off are we going to be?" This is very frightening language that he uses. "*How much worse off will we be if we trample underfoot the Son of God?*" What a jarring image! How much worse off will we be if we take the blood of the covenant, that is the New Covenant by which we have been made holy, forgiven, and sanctified, he says "How much worse off will we be if we take that and treat that as a common thing?" "How much worse off will we be if we insult the Holy Spirit?" I have been straining all week to think of what it looks like to walk on the Son of God. I don't really even want to know what that looks like. I don't want to know firsthand what it would be like to take Christ's shed blood, by which were sealed into eternal fellowship, and disregard that as a common thing. I certainly don't want any of us to get close to knowing what insulting the Spirit of grace would be like. Is it to assume God's forgiveness?

In Hebrews 6, earlier in this sermon, the writer had used imagery that if we if we walk away from Christ, if we sin deliberately, it is like we are crucifying the Son of God again. If we treat as common, maybe it's a false familiarity with the greatness of what Christ has done. Insulting the Spirit in the gospels is to attribute the powerful, unique work of the Holy Spirit to demonic power. These three images are scary. They are things to which we should all say we want nothing to do with that. The writer says in Hebrews 10:35:

"For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.'"

He says in Hebrews 10:31:

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Our God-given capacity for fear is rightly utilized in this point. Parents need to give to their kids a healthy fear. I'm not talking about abuse, obviously, but there is that respect for authority and those who are giving you instructions motivated by love, for your own good. When a parent says to a child: "You need to listen to me," a child needs to listen.

We were driving around on Friday, just doing a tour of our neighborhood, a recreational tour, and we were coming to a cul-de-sac. It was the perfect scenario for a cul-de-sac. It was the perfect slice of Americana. There were three basketball hoops set up. It was every parent's dream: cul-de-sacs are safe; I can put up the basketball hoop; I can release my children into the wild with chalk and basketballs, and they are going to be free and safe. As we came into the cul-

de-sac, and I was turning around in the end of it with my van, there was a dad with his young son playing basketball. The young son grabbed the rebound. He saw the van coming, and for reasons totally unbeknownst to me, and certainly to his father, this young boy decided that he would move into the path of the van. I heard his father yelling for him to stop. It was a very strange thing. I was going slowly, recreational driving, and I was able to stop in plenty of time, so his life was never really in danger, but I saw the father's face that looked like: "What were you thinking? Here comes a van and you move into the path!" and the boy was like: "Oh, yea," and he just walked away. There is a right and healthy fear, a reverence, and Hebrews wants us to embrace this. If you don't utilize your God-given capacity for fear, to fear God, which the Bible says is the beginning of wisdom, if you don't use it for that, then your God-given capacity for fear will be spent on things that are not to be feared. You will end up being afraid of the loss of your reputation; you will end up being afraid of what someone might think of you; you will end up being afraid of terrorists; or you will end up being fearful or have phobias that lurk up and take hold of your heart. They will hijack your God-given capacity for fear if it is not rightly placed. I never want to get anywhere close to what's being described here, to disregard my heavenly Father in such a way.

Now that the writer has our attention, he moves thankfully to end the chapter with an exhortation, and since I'm an American and optimistic, I am going to spend more time on the exhortation. In the exhortation beginning in Hebrews 10:32, the writer says:

"But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings."

Recall or remember the former days. In other words, remember how you got started. Remember after you were enlightened you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. Hebrews wants us to remember who we are. He wants us to remember the things that we did at the beginning of our walk with Christ. Sometimes we have to be reminded of the love that we showed during our honeymoon. Husbands and wives know what I'm talking about. Sometimes we have to be reminded of how we felt when our child was born when we have those moments of deep frustration: "Why aren't you listening?" We have to be reminded of who we are. He says: "Remember who you are and what you've already done. Remember the strong beginning that you had; remember what happened after you were first enlightened, after you were first illuminated with the shining light of gospel truth." What happened to you after you first came to know Christ? The writer says that you endured a great contest of suffering. The imagery that he uses here is an athletic image, perhaps the most extended use of athletic imagery in the New Testament. The Greek word here is that you endured a great *athlosis*, a great athletic contest, a great struggle. Marty Brennaman, our local Cincinnati Reds broadcaster, would be pleased. It is like the titanic struggle. It happens every game. The athletic imagery that is introduced here in Hebrews 10:32 is carried forward all the way until we get to Hebrews 12. In

Hebrews 11, the writer will fill out the stadium, and he will tell us who was sitting in the stands—the great heroes of faith who have gone before us. In Hebrews 12, he will say we are to *fix our eyes on Jesus Christ*, the author and perfecter of our faith, who completed the race. Jesus is the great athlete in this extended image that begins here. He reminds us that we endured, that we persevered, that we triumphed in a great contest, a great struggle, a great competition for public truth. He explains the nature of that and what is sometimes involved in committing ourselves publicly to Christ. He says that sometimes you are publicly exposed to reproach and affliction. The words that are used here describe verbal insult first, and secondly, a physical suffering. It's the insult that can happen when your boss at work discovers that you are a Christian and thinks that might interfere with your ability to make sound judgments for the company, and so you are passed over for the promotion for which are otherwise qualified. It's a verbal insult when someone of your classmates sees that you have committed yourself to Christ and begins to gossip against you. It's the verbal insult or cost of being excluded from the invitation to the party that everyone else is attending. A verbal abuse. I remember when I first committed my life to Christ and shared with great joy with my extended family, one of my relatives said to me: "You are just full that same Christian blah, blah, blah. I didn't know what to say. But God's Word triumphs. You can face physical suffering, as well, and the hearers of the original sermon to Hebrews had faced that. Not only did they suffer insult, in some cases they were physically mistreated. Hebrews 10:34 says that despite those things:

"For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one."

This is something that can happen only if the Holy Spirit is working in your life. Most of us do not accept the plundering of our goods readily. It is woven deep into the fabric of our being; it is communicated to us electronically and with mass media on a daily basis, that our things are our things and they belong to us, and if you threaten to take my things, I will circle my things and hold onto them. If necessary, if I have to release the shield of protection around my things, I will release my strong arm so I can take you down while I hold onto my things with my left arm. Yet, the writer of Hebrews says you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property. It is like that great scene in Victor Hugo's novel *Les Miserables* where Jean Valjean steals the candlesticks from the church, and the priest comes out, and instead of condemning him, just says, "You forgot to take these also." How do you do that? When someone takes something of yours and you say, "You know, did you also need my car?" Hebrews tells us how you do this in a great phrase at the end. The only way that you can do that is if you know that you have a better possession and an abiding one. Remember Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount of where we are to lay up our treasure. We place our treasure where moths and rust do not consume and thieves cannot break in and steal. We have a lasting and better possession, and we will hear more about that in Hebrews 11 and 12.

The writer moves on to encourage us and exhort us in Hebrews 10:35. After charging us to remember who we are, he says:

“Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.”

This is a very specific confidence or boldness that comes to us in Hebrews. This is not generic boldness; this is the specific boldness of Hebrews 10:19 where we read last Sunday that we have confidence, that we have boldness, to enter into God's very presence because we have Jesus seated on the throne and a Great High Priest over God's House. This is a specific boldness of Hebrews 4:16:

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Hebrews 10:35 charges us not to let anything move you away from the confidence that you have in knowing that sin death and hell have been defeated and that God's new creation has been launched. I can't think of anything else to tell you, or to tell myself, that would give me a stronger basis for encouragement and confidence. If that doesn't make you look ahead without fear of the wrong things and with hope and courage and confidence, I don't know what else to say. I'm going to say it again. It's my best stuff! Sin, death, and hell have been defeated. There's no accusation against you that can stand—nothing the great accuser, the devil, could ever say can stick because we have been clothed with Christ's own righteousness; the tomb is empty; the new creation has begun; Jesus has all authority, and so we come to Him boldly. We come to Him, into His presence. As pastor Scott said, this is where we come to be renewed in strength and hope and courage. This is also where we come with hope-filled prayers that God will answer them.

I remember when we first found out that N.T. Wright was coming, and I was talking with Lydia. I looked at her, she looked at me, and we said, “How many students should be pray will come? What would be a really bold prayer?” We had between two and three hundred last year for Eric Metaxas. We looked at each other, and we both had the same number. We said, “Let’s pray for six hundred.” We went right over six hundred this week. I really want you to pray with me for something specific for that particular time. It was a moment in my own life that really shifted where I was going. I was a senior in college, living in Washington DC, and I was finishing an internship there, when my boss told me that John Stott was coming to Washington DC. He was to be speaking at a church. I didn't even know who John Stott was when I was a senior in college. I said ‘okay,’ and we went to the church. The church was jam packed. We couldn't even get into the sanctuary. I had premium seating in the church kitchen. This was in the 90s, so there was no live streaming, no video. There was a brown, dated-looking speaker against a concrete block wall. I never saw John Stott with my eyes, but he spoke about the life-giving, transformative power of the cross of Jesus Christ. I had never heard anyone speak about the

cross with that depth of insight. I had never met a Christian with his capacity and gifts of articulating the glory of what God had done in Jesus, and it changed the direction of my life. So would you pray with me in particular for those 650 students who signed up to hear N.T. Wright, that God would really do something amazing? The writer of Hebrews wants us to know that we should not cast aside our confidence, but enter into God's presence boldly, that we should pray regularly. In Hebrews 10:36, the writer knows what we need. He says:

“For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.”

I don't know about you, but the word *endurance* needs to be interpreted. If you say, “I'm enduring it,” that almost sounds passive, doesn't it? That is not the image here. The Greek word that he uses, *hypomone*, is difficult to translate. Different versions render it differently, but *hypomone* means all of these things: it means that you are going to need fortitude; it means that the race is longer than you thought; it means steadfastness. That means that as you start running the Christian race, there are more hills than you thought. I remember the first and only time I ran home to my house from Kenwood, and I never knew how much higher Mason is than Kenwood. You don't notice that when you're driving, but when you're running, you notice every degree. You are going to need perseverance. *Hypomone* means that you have moments while you're running the race when you think: “I'm going to quit. My body hurts. This is harder than people told me.” You will need patience to let the race finish fully, but this exhortation to endure, to have patience, fortitude, steadfastness, and perseverance, means that we are to be people who complete the race in front of us, make it to the end, finish the work that God has given us, and then enter into His promised rest. It means that we do God's will and then receive this glorious promise at the end of new bodies, of full participation in a world with no evil. There is a great and glorious ending coming at the end, and we need to know that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and hell, that the tomb is empty, and that there is a race to run, work to do. That is what we need to know after Easter. Easter is not “Hallelujah, I believe Jesus, and now we just sit back and wait till He comes back.” The post-Easter message of the risen Jesus is: “Make disciples of all nations.” The post-resurrection message of Jesus Christ is: “I'm breathing the Holy Spirit on you so that you can go.” One of the lines that Jesus said that I'm still struggling to understand is when Jesus tells the disciples: “It is actually good that I am ascending to the Father to sit down at the heavenly throne, because actually you guys are going to do some cooler things than I did.” What does that mean? I think it means that with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, an innumerable multitude of all nations are brought in, and Jesus, out of His kindness says: “You know what, I'd like to use you all to do that.”

The story of the daughter who is dry on the boat is moving. That happened yesterday. But, you know, that family wouldn't have come to trust Jesus without the Christian standing on the shore sharing his faith. That's a beautiful picture of how Jesus is working in the world and wants

to use us. "Keep going," and the writer says in Hebrews 10:37:

"For, 'Yet a little while, and the coming One will come and will not delay;'"

He is combining a quotation from Isaiah 26 and Habakkuk 2. Listen to Isaiah 26, the full citation. Sometimes the New Testament writers give us just a phrase and they imagine that we have the whole context in mind. Let tell you what's around this little phrase *yet a little while*. Isaiah says: "Your dead will live and your bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy. The earth will give birth to the dead. Come, My people, for yet a little while, and judgment will pass by, and the Lord is coming." That's what he wants us to pick up in that little phrase, *just a little while*. He also says the coming One will come and will not delay. Habakkuk 2 speaks of "the coming one, the promised one." Jesus will return in visible glory. This is certain, and so the rest of the citation in Hebrews 10:38 says:

". . . but My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him."

This is faith in Jesus who has died and who was raised and who has promised His Spirit and commissioned us to work in this world for His name's sake. The righteous will live by faith with their eyes riveted upon Christ and will not shrink back with a timid spirit, will not fall away. The writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 10:39:

"But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls."

We move forward. The summons, the charge, of Jesus on the other side of the empty tomb is: *"I am with you always,"* and He is going out in front of us, and He is calling us as a church family to follow Him into God's future, which has started now.

When we look at Jesus this morning, what do we see? We see Jesus, our once and future King. We are summoned this morning to take seriously the warning of disregarding Him and receive the encouragement that comes from remembering who we are and who we are called to be, to remember the strong beginning, and to persevere with fortitude unto the ending. I want to ask for your help as we have a unique opportunity to lean into God's future in a very specific way as we face the largest single outreach event I have ever seen at Kenwood. Pray for the special meetings with N.T. Wright as he speaks at U.C. tomorrow afternoon, and then in the evening, come with a heart to serve the many visitors we are expecting. Pray that the Lord does mighty things, that He speaks to us powerfully, and that we are challenged precisely in this direction. God's timing is perfect. Wright's book that he just finished is on the meaning of the cross and Jesus' resurrection and what this means for the church. It is perfect timing, and we are going to come ready and eager to serve.

I want to end this morning with a quote from N.T. Wright's book. It took him 416 pages to get

to this statement. He ends by saying:

“The cross stands at the center of the Christian message, the Christian story, and the Christian life and mission. It has lost none of its revolutionary and transformative power down through the centuries. The cross is where the great story of God and Israel and then focused still more sharply on the story of God and Jesus, came into terrible but life-giving clarity.

“The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth was a one-off event, the one on behalf of the many, the one moment in history on behalf of all others through which sins would be forgiven, the powers robbed of their power, and humans redeemed to take their place as worshippers and stewards, celebrating the powerful victory of God in his Messiah and so gaining the Spirit’s power to make his kingdom effective in the world.

“The message for us, then, is plain.

Embrace the covenant of vocation or rather be embraced by it as the Creator calls you to a genuine humanness at last, calls and equips you to bear and reflect his image.

Celebrate the revolution that happened once for all when the power of love overcame the love of power” (*N.T. Wright, The Day the Revolution Began, 416*).

Jesus Christ reigns. Hallelujah, Amen. Let’s pray.

Father, we thank You for this morning. We thank You for this day. We thank You for your work in the world, that You call us into active service. Help us to live in the power of Your redeeming love and to join Your mission in the world. We give You thanks and praise.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen.