

## ***Jesus the New and Living Way***

Sermon Series on Hebrews

Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

EASTER SUNDAY April 16, 2017

**TEXT:** Hebrews 10:1-25

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! I love to say that. We welcome you this Easter Sunday to Kenwood Baptist Church. It is a privilege to be here in God's presence. We have been



considering together this spring the Person and work of Jesus through the book of the Bible called Hebrews, a letter or a sermon addressed to early Christians. In this letter, we are directed time and time again to fix our attention, fix our gaze, upon the Person of Christ. Hebrews 10 is the climax of this portion of God's Word. We have seen the central

section, Hebrew 7, 8, 9, and 10, arriving at this place where we have the privilege this morning to consider Jesus, the new and living way by which we can draw near to God. We have seen throughout the spring that Jesus is God's one and only Son. He is the true humanity; He gives us rest; He is the source of eternal salvation, our permanent High Priest; He is the mediator of the New Covenant; He is the once-for-all time sacrifice for sin; and this morning, we see He is the new and living way. Through Him we come to God boldly, with confidence and full assurance that we will be accepted in His name.

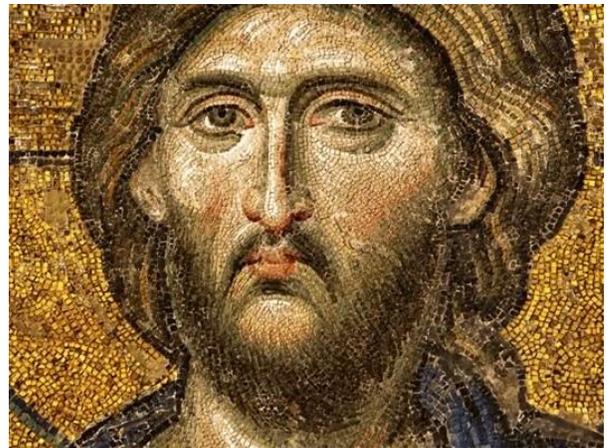
Hebrews 10 begins by saying that the law was but a shadow of the good things to come, not the true form of these realities. Some of us with a philosophical background may read this text and think that the writer has in view something like Platonism, that we see like Plato's analogy of the cave, that this world is shadows and the real things are elsewhere. That really isn't the imagery of this passage. The good news is that the Bible doesn't teach Platonism; it teaches faith in Jesus Christ, so the more accurate translation of this opening verse is in the King James Version. (Sometimes things that are 400 years old are still better.) Hebrews 10:1, in the King James Version says:

*“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, . . .”*

In other words, the Old Testament has the shape of a shadow that is cast by the image of another. When you are walking and you look down and you see your shadow, your shadow has a sharp correspondence to who you really are. Sometimes it's a little bit longer or little bit shorter depending on how the light is shining, but it's you in the shadow. The writer of Hebrews wants us to see the Old Testament has the shadow that is cast by the brilliant light of Christ, the figure of Christ shining back in time and pointing forward. The controlling image that we have held throughout this spring was drawn from the largest church in the world for a thousand



years, the Hagia Sofia church in modern-day Turkey in Istanbul. For a thousand years, this mosaic was in the largest church in the world. It was covered over for five hundred years, and in the last hundred years, this mosaic was rediscovered. As we move in close to the central picture of Christ, this has been our controlling image of Jesus, the all-powerful. He is the image; He is the figure that cast a shadow back in time and also points us forward. So we are invited to look from promise to fulfillment, from shadow to substance, and to fix our eyes on Christ. When Jesus enters into the world, Hebrews 10:5 tells us:



*“Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for Me;’”*

Notice the quote in this verse. It is a quotation from Psalm 40. Hebrews, like many other passages in the New Testament, presents Jesus as the speaker of the Royal Psalms. Those of you who love U2 will recognize Psalm 40 as the basis for the lyrics of their 15th most popular song ever, called “40”:

"I waited patiently for the Lord  
He inclined and heard my cry  
He brought me up out of the pit  
Out of the miry clay  
I will sing, sing a new song  
He set my feet upon a rock  
And made my footsteps firm  
Many will see  
Many will see and fear  
And put their trust in the Lord."

Those are great lyrics. It's a great song. Those are lyrics written by King David three thousand years ago. But the next line of Psalm 40 says this:

*"In sacrifice and offering You have not delighted, but You have given me an open ear.  
Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required."*

Literally, the Hebrew text says that *"ears You have cut for me,"* or *"You have made holes in my ears."* The imagery in Hebrews and in Psalm 40 of God's boring of our ears, actually comes from Scripture. It is a scriptural image from Exodus 21 of when someone is serving another, and they love serving that person and they want to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly for all time into the master's service. The only time when being a slave is good is when you have the greatest master, and in Exodus 21:5-6, we read:

*"But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever."*

The imagery of Psalm 40 is that you have put a hole in my ear and I am totally Yours. I am here to do Your will. In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, known as the Septuagint, this line was rendered: *"You prepared a body for Me,"* and that's the version that is quoted in Hebrews. The imagery is the same: it's an image of Jesus as the speaker in the Psalm; Jesus the one who comes to do God's will and to live out a life of perfect obedience and faithfulness. This week we remember that faithful life of Christ on what we sometimes call the Calvary Road. Calvary is the Place of the Skull, it's the place that culminates in the cross of Christ. When we think of Jesus as living out a life faithful to God, I want to take us on four stops along this road that we retrace and remember this week, and that Hebrews 10 assumes for us.

Stop Number One: **The Upper Room.** A body You have prepared for Me. What does Christ do with His body? We see Jesus first in the Upper Room, taking bread and breaking it, giving it to

His disciples and telling them: *“This is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.”* That night, Thursday night, called Maundy Thursday, is the night in which Jesus gives the New Commandment: *“Love one another as I have loved you.”* The text in Hebrews continues with a quote from Psalm 40:7-8:

*“Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of Me: I delight to do Your will, O My God; Your law is within My heart.’”*

Stop Number Two: **The Garden of Gethsemane**. Jesus came to do the will of God to show us what that looked like, and this is our second stop on the Calvary Road. When we see Jesus coming to do the will of the Father, we come to the Garden of Gethsemane on Friday evening. Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, His disciples followed Him, and He came into the Garden of Gethsemane and He prayed to the Father in Luke 22:42:

*“Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.”*

Jesus signals for us that His body was broken, that He came to do the will of the Father in total commitment to God.

Stop Number Three: **At the Cross**. This stop is Good Friday, which takes us to the cross of Christ. Good Friday is so named because of the climactic achievement of Jesus on the cross, His willing and obedient suffering. We had a very moving re-presentation and celebration of Good Friday here at Kenwood on Friday night, but you know, many people around us actually don't know why Good Friday is good. I want you to be absolutely certain. Just yesterday, I was talking with a neighbor who teaches second grade in a local school system. I asked out of curiosity us how many languages there are in her school system. She said there are 42. I said: *“We are trying to catch up with that. We have 20 languages at Kenwood.”* The reality is that people around us, whether they've come from a different religious tradition, whether they have just grown up in a very secular American home, the cultural currency of Good Friday is not obvious to all. Our daughter Salome was teaching—she teaches kids occasionally through the week—and she asked this group of kids about Good Friday. Half of the kids knew and half didn't. They had no idea. One of the kids said: *“Doesn't it have something to do with Jesus?”* That's a good start. Actually, it does have something to do of Jesus, which you would never know if you had only read the Home Depot circular this week. If the only thing you read this week was the mailing circular from Home Depot, you would think that Good Friday is not really good at all except for buying things on sale, because we've taken the November Black Friday and thought: *“What could be better than selling half of our year's goods in one day? Let's try to do that again.”* Have you noticed the cultural creep, the secular creep of



Spring Black Friday? When I saw that, I thought: “Oh, wait, this is not it. This is not the good news.” I saw this and I read the full version that said: “We are bringing it back,” and I thought, this weekend ‘bringing back’ is not about geraniums on sale. This weekend, ‘bringing back’ is life from the dead. So, Good Friday—and I’m not saying it’s unchristian to buy plants, let me be clear—but that’s not the central message. My point is that many of us, and many lives around us, don’t know. So, if you do know, then don’t judge or condescend people who don’t know, and if they don’t know, then you have a great joy and privilege to say: “Let me tell you why this is such a great day!” I’m not suggesting that we just rush to the parking lot at Lowe’s or Home Depot and say, “Put those plants down.” That’s not the point. The point is: “If you don’t know, let me tell you. Good Friday is good because the Son of God willingly offered His life as a ransom for you and for me. Good Friday is good because Jesus, our Great High Priest, carried the sin of the world upon His shoulders.”

Good Friday did turn black for three hours in the afternoon, but that blackness from noon to three, the very time that the Passover lambs were being slaughtered, the sky turned dark in Jerusalem for three hours as God’s wrath against sin was absorbed forever. Death was defeated. The gospel writers tell us that there was darkness over the whole land from the sixth hour to the ninth hour, that’s noon to three. Luke tells us what happened next: After Jesus offered Himself for your salvation and mine, the curtain or the veil of the temple was torn in two. Matthew 27:51 tells us this extra detail:

*“And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.”*

Who could have done that? Josephus tells us that the veil was so tightly woven together that two teams of oxen couldn’t pull it apart, and yet when Jesus died, the veil was opened. Hebrews 10:12 tells us:

*“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God,”*

This morning we have good news to celebrate because Jesus our Great High Priest has passed through the sanctuary and offered Himself. We have good news because Jesus not only atones for our sin, but he ratifies the New Covenant in His blood, as Hebrews quotes yet again. Hebrews tells us that Jesus, after making this once-for-all time offering for sin, sat enthroned in the midst of the sanctuary. Have you ever noticed that people who offer themselves a sacrifice unto death usually are not reported as being alive! Hebrews 10 tells us that after offering Himself unto death, Jesus sat down at the right hand of God. He is alive, and this morning we gather in celebration.

Stop Number Four: **The Empty Tomb**. The events of Good Friday ultimately are good because they take us forth to an empty tomb. They take us to a place where death is defeated,

conquered forever. I met with Pastor Fred this week, and he did a beautiful job opening the service doing the Easter litany. He hadn't done that before, and I told him: "Fred, right before you get up there, you need to get yourself in the mentality that you saw Jesus crucified; you came to the tomb; you saw the angel rolling the stone back. Get your mind in that place and then stand up here and say 'He is risen!' and let us say 'He is risen indeed!'"

Easter means that the tomb is empty and a new life has begun. N.T. Wright says it like this:

"The death of Jesus was the moment when the great gate of human history, bolted with iron bars and overgrown with toxic weeds, burst open so that the Creator's project of reconciliation between heaven and earth could at last be set in powerful motion."

(N.T. Wright, "The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus's Crucifixion.")

God's saving purpose for the world is on display, and it has come to be in these great events. These are the truths that support Easter; these are the truths that drive the reading of Hebrews 7, 8, 9, and 10; and now we must ask briefly what this has to do with us. Obviously, it has everything to do with us.

Hebrews 10 applies these great truths to us. It's a preacher's dream when the text actually makes its own application, and that is what we have this morning. Hebrews 10:19-25 are actually a single sentence in the original text. It is an eloquent sentence; it is a glorious sentence; it is a sentence with 92 words. The English language just can't handle thoughts that are that complicated. It just blows the margins for a Twitter Tweet, not even close. You can't get even a third of this sentence in a Tweet. You would have to do three Tweets just to get this thought out, and yet here it is. The writer applies Hebrews 10:19-25 to us. Let's follow this glorious sentence. The writer says in Hebrews 10:19-20:

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Holy Places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, . . ."

The Holy Place is the very presence of God. We can now come to God through this new and living way. The veil separating us from God has been opened through the death of Christ. We have boldness or confidence then to come to God; and we have a Great High Priest, that is Jesus Himself. Having these two wondrous beings, there are three calls to action. The first is in Hebrews 10:22. He says:

*"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."*

The charge of Easter morning is to come to God's presence, **to draw near**. This is this technical

terminology for coming to worship. Everything has been ready. It is time to enter and receive God's invitation. The writer seems to know that we are inclined to stay back from God, and so he gives four qualifiers to this, overcoming barriers in our own soul. He says: "Let us come to God, draw near to God: first, **with a true heart**, and this overcomes our spiritual apathy. Sometimes we are deadened to spiritual things; we have given our affections over to others, and the writer says: "Come to God with a true heart." This is the heart that we receive from God when He takes out the heart of stone and gives us a heart of flesh. We come to God, secondly, **in full assurance of faith**, overcoming our ignorance. Sometimes we don't come to God because we don't know God or don't know how to come. Faith in Jesus Christ shows us both who God is and the way to Him. Sometimes we stay back from God because of our guilt, and the writer says that we come **with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience**. It doesn't matter what you've done. If you are washed in the shed blood of Christ, then you can come into His presence. He says, lastly, that he overcomes our shame as **our bodies are washed with pure water**.

So, application number one is to **come, draw near, to God**.

Application number two is to **hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering or vacillating**. Our confession this morning is Jesus Christ, Son of God, Great High Priest, who offered Himself once for all, living and reigning, seated at the right hand of the Father. This is our confession. This is what we believe, and the writer says to hold fast to that without wavering, without compromising, without diluting our convictions or becoming distracted in some way from the centrality of Christ.

The writer tells as application number three in Hebrews 10:24 that the implication of all that Jesus has done is that we are to consider how to **stir one another up**, to motivate one another, **to love and good works**, or acts of benevolence. The literal translation of this call is to look carefully at one another, and when you see one another, you will see needs and circumstances that will prompt and provoke and stir us to the expression of love, a love that we have received in Christ. When we look carefully at one another, it will provide opportunities for us to act in ways that display Christ's love and benevolence toward us. We need each other to live out the Christian life, and so he resolves this charge to us by saying in Hebrews 10:24-25:

*"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."*

That *Day* has a capital *D*, for it refers to that Day of the Lord Jesus. You see, He will return in visible glory, not to atone for sin again, but He will return in visible glory as Judge and Re-maker of all that is, and our gathering together for worship that happens on Easter Sunday and throughout the year is the time that we proclaim this news by our gathering. N.T. Wright says it

like this:

“Every Christian needs the encouragement of every other Christian. Everyone who comes through the door of the place of worship, whether it be a house in a back street or a great cathedral in a public square, is a real encouragement to everyone else who is there. This is part of the way in which we can stir one another up to work hard at the central actions of Christian living, ‘love and good works.’ And we need this encouragement all the more, as we believe that we are drawing closer to the great day when with Jesus’ reappearance, God will complete his work of new creation.”

It's Sunday morning. I said last Sunday that “It’s Friday, but Sunday's coming.” This is Sunday, and God's new creation has begun. Will you receive this invitation? Let's live in it together. Hallelujah! Amen. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we extol You this morning. We magnify You. You have conquered death and sin. You have given us the visible representation of the invisible God. Lord Jesus, You have shown us who You are. You have fulfill the promises of old. You have walked the Calvary Road, and you have borne our sin. Lord Jesus, we follow You from the Upper Room. We follow You through the Garden of Gethsemane. We fix our eyes upon You at the cross, and Lord Jesus, we stand in awe and wonder and glad amazement at Your empty tomb.

Would you stand together with me as we proclaim the good news that He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Amen.