

Title: Draw Near (and don't let anything stop you)
Text: Hebrews 10.19-22
Theme: trusting God heartfully
Series: Hebrews #26
Prop Stmtnt God demands us to trust him passionately, personally, completely and obediently

Robin Henig wrote an article last month for the New York Times Magazine on young adults in their 20's who are not emerging into adulthood. 50 years ago most people, by the time they hit 30 had already accomplished the 5 generally accepted milestones that measure adult status: 1) Completing school 2) Leaving home 3) Getting married 4) Having a child and 5) Establishing Financial Independence. Now, less than 50% of women have reached those milestones by 30 and less than 33% of men. Henig writes that as a generation, they are constantly moving residence (one-third move each year), changing jobs (average is seven jobs in their 20s), and moving back home with parents (one-third at least once). Two-thirds cohabit with "a romantic partner" and delay marriage until their late 20s.

I have watched this trend with growing concern. Part of it is set into motion early on by parents whose favorite words are "be careful." **If** the child is let out of the house, he has a cell phone, GPS tracking system around his neck, a homing device in his shoe, a helmet, mouth-guard, elbow pads, industrial-sized container of hand sanitizer and bacteria wipes. Everything in life is a danger to be afraid of. One of the hardest and yet best things that you can do for your kid is to let him try and fail and try again. It is in failure that he discovers God's grace. But, he won't need God, when he has pillow-parents who will cushion every fall and clean up every mess. There is so much that I could say to that part of the problem, but there is another aspect of this that I want to address. In our over-protective culture, we have lost the "go for it" challenge and the "stick with it" spirit that goes along with it.

Parents reflect a government that regulates everything in the name of safety and security. The citizenship of this country looks a lot like the 20-something generation and expects the government to do everything for them. We have to have the government to tell us what to eat, what to wear, and of course, what to think and believe and with that comes the loss of individual responsibility and the loss of dreamers and visionaries. Martin Luther King inspired millions with his "I Have a Dream" speech. John F. Kennedy stunned NASA when he paid a surprise visit one day to some engineers in the Apollo program and said, "Gentlemen, I'm here to set the agenda. In eight years we will send a man to the moon." And we did! And to this day, we say things like, "If we could put a man on the moon, how come we can't fix potholes!?" Today, Kennedy's dream would be shot down because he would use up too many carbon footprint credits and if Reagan would have said today, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" he would be excoriated for creating more waste for a landfill. And, by the way, changing political parties in DC won't change it. But even though our culture is completely bogged down with inertia there yet remains a mighty, nimble, creative force made up of individual souls banded together by a common spirit, in a common cause, by a common vision, serving under a

perfect leader whose dream is worth dying for because it is guaranteed to happen. It's called the church and nothing can stop her, not even the very gates of hell. Before we read our text, consider the audience of this sermon-letter to the Hebrews. This small, discouraged and persecuted group was made up of the no-names of Rome, living in the shadow of that mighty empire's capital city. But years later when the Roman Empire had crumbled into ruins, there stood the church. Somebody pressed on. This text pulls no punches. It is about commitment, plain and simple. And while there are many fanatics in this world who are willing to blow themselves up in the name of a cause, there is only one cause that is truly great and guaranteed forever. The question and the challenge before you is simple, but demanding. Are you in? If you want a comfortable, safe, undemanding, compromising, emerging, seeking, go your own way kind of religion, you are in the wrong place. Whatever you do, DON'T FOLLOW CHRIST! But don't expect your soul to be satisfied and your heart to be thrilled, your sins to be forgiven and to be set free either. Here is what this text is saying. There is no middle ground. There is no compromise. The call of the gospel is the call of Christ to total surrender, expressed in this text by saying, Draw Near (and don't let anything stop you).

Read Text:

For 25 sermons I have attempted to lay out the theology of this book. Now, we turn the corner from explanation to exhortation. And so, by God's grace, I am going to seek to press these truths into your very souls and call us to live them out. These truths are given in depth so that your soul will sing with delight in a faith-intoxicated obedience. Therefore, since the emphasis of this text is on commitment, the emphasis of this address will be the same. First, let me show you from the text why this is.

- "Therefore" tells us that we are looking at the purpose for what has been written
- In the original language, this (19-25) is one long sentence.
- There are 2 "since we have"
- There are 3 "Let us"
- Today, we are focusing on the first "let us" but
- Each "let us" is based on the "since we have" statements

1. **Recognize what Christ has accomplished.** (19-21)

a. Christ has accomplished Free Access

This statement summarizes the two "since we have" statements.

First of all, we have confidence to enter into the very dwelling place of God (imagine). That is stunning! And that ought to give us an idea of how gloriously sufficient the sacrifice for us really is. The word translated "confidence" has the idea of freedom of expression or conduct. Here is God, the Father, loving us so much that we rightfully feel the freedom to completely engage him and enjoy him. We are emboldened in this all because of Christ. "The holy places" refers to the very dwelling place of God in the heavens of which the tabernacle was designed to reflect and which will one day be the

place where God forever dwells with his people. “By the blood of Jesus” refers to the sacrificial death of Christ for us on the cross. “By the new and living way” refers to the fact that it is no longer a ritualistic way based on animals that have to keep dying, but is based on the once for all sacrifice of Christ, who was raised from the dead. Now, here is another fascinating detail of the Old Testament system fulfilled in Christ. Between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place in the Tabernacle was an enormous curtain that blocked access to the place where God’s glory was manifested on the Ark of the Covenant. When Christ died, you know from the gospel accounts that the curtain “mysteriously” ripped (Matthew and Mark say) from top to bottom. No man could rip this curtain; much less rip it from top to bottom. So, not only does this obviously show us that the way into the very dwelling place of God is now open, but the text here in Hebrews makes it clear that the MEANS by which we have this access is “through his flesh.” In other words, the Author of Hebrews is showing us that the curtain was a picture of the body of Christ. The rupturing of the body of Christ in crucifixion ripped open the way to God. It is only through Christ that we have access, but through Christ we have free, immediate and always available access.

The next “since we have” phrase summarizes all that we have learned about how Christ was not only a perfect sacrifice, he was a perfect priest. He was the offering and the offerer. It too emphasizes the free access that has been opened for us.

b. For Us

This free access is for us, the believers, the group, the congregation, the body, the family, the vine, the flock, the temple, the church. This is not just what you have; this is what we have because of Christ. When you think of the gospel, you need to think congregationally. We need to think as a body. We are saved individually from individualism into a body where our uniqueness is enmeshed with others so that together we look like Christ.

Now, after ten chapters of laying a foundation, what does the Author of Hebrews tell us to do? He tells us something that he already told us back in chapter 4. Let’s go to him! “Let us draw near!” This entire section of Hebrews, which explains in detail about how Christ is the greatest priest ever, begins and ends with this command to draw near. Why? Why do we have to be told to do this? Why wouldn’t you?

We have to be told because our tendency is to stay back – but why? What logical reason is there for us to be shy about God, our Creator? Let’s ask ourselves this: Why do we hold back from others? Why do we dread meeting certain people or avoid them at all costs?

The fear of rejection is a big reason isn’t it? We all know what it is like to be ostracized and told that we don’t fit in. It is no secret that some of the loudest and funniest people that we know live with a terrible fear of rejection. Related to rejection is embarrassment. We fear that someone will discover a weakness or a vulnerability about us that now they can exploit and use that as leverage against us. Most of us have poured ourselves into a relationship and then either because of a death, or a divorce, or a move, or a disagreement

we have lost that person. The thought of loving again is difficult because we do not want to go through the loss again. It seems easier to be guarded and to protect your heart.

Relationships can make us uncomfortable not only because people find things out about us, but we find things out about them. Some people look a whole lot better from a distance – know what I mean? When you really get to know a person, you see their heart without make-up and it is usually disappointing. This is particularly evident in politics. How many times have we believed people's campaign promises and election hype only to see how incompetent, insecure, and hypocritical they really are? We're getting set up for that same thing again. We'll vote these people out and vote these people in and that will fix the economy, the military, the borders and the morals of the country. Are you kidding me? This country is part of the kingdoms of this world. You learn over time that leaders let you down. Everyone is broken. But, when you see it up close now you have to bear that and it is so easy to think that we don't want the responsibility for another broken person.

I can understand these instincts with others, but what about God? Why would we have to be commanded to draw near to God? God, through Christ has eliminated every single excuse that our hearts may create.

Do you fear rejection by God? He rejected his own Son on the cross and abandoned him there while he died for you so that you would never, ever be rejected by Him. Do you fear embarrassment? He knows you so well, that he knows things about you that you don't even know that would be even more reason to be embarrassed and loves you intently, intensely, intentionally and infinitely. He does not exploit your weaknesses and mock your insecurities, he leads you beside still waters, he restores your soul, he lifts you up when you stumble and carries you when you fall. He protects you from accusations and gave up his life so that you would be his forever. And while most of us know what it is like to lose someone close, we will never lose him. Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. The closer that you get to God, the more reasons you find to love him, to enjoy him, to rest in him, to be comforted by him, to trust him, to worship him, to adore him, to ask him, to talk with him, to dance with him, to delight in him, to be quiet with him, and to be at home with him. So, why would we ever have to be told to draw near?

There are basically three reasons:

a) Pride

The softer side of pride (if there is one) does not want to admit that we actually need God because the other side of pride says, "I don't need you – God." Now, that is crazy, but that is how human nature tends to think. Stephen Hawking is the recently retired Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge, a position once held by John Newton. In a book that Hawking is about to release, this mathematical genius opines that we don't need God to create the world because we had gravity. His exact words were, "Because there is a law such as gravity, the Universe can and will create

itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the Universe exists, why we exist.”

I know for a fact that this guy can do geometry better than me, but when it comes to theories of origins, he drives off the road. He says, we don't need God because in the beginning, we had gravity. If we grant him that, he still hasn't explained where gravity came from. Atheists look at us like we are swimming in the shallow end of the gene pool because we believe that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” and that we are supposed to see and believe the overwhelming logic and scientific evidence for a cosmic spontaneous combustion that occurred from nothing and created a universe so large that no one has ever been able to see its end. Why is it sophisticated to believe that in the beginning gravity created the heavens and the earth, and unsophisticated to believe that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (including gravity), especially since then we haven't seen gravity create anything else?

High profile atheists like Christopher Hitchens are easy to take a shot at but, what about us? We vigorously claim to love God, yet, pray so little, and are way too quick to bail out on God when our world operates as God said it would; under the influence of sin, groaning and waiting its redemption.

b) Punishment

Another reason why we hold out on God and refuse to get close is because we are trying to punish Him. Are you in that boat? Life has not given you what you want and you are not where you thought you would be, so, in your mind you have the right to hold out on God and refuse to draw near to him. Now, how exactly is that supposed to punish him? I suspect that the third reason is probably the most prominent.

c) Guilt

There are two types of guilt. There is real guilt and there is imagined guilt. A few years ago I knew a guy who refused to draw near to his wife. I could not understand it. He simply would not engage her in any kind of a heart relationship. He was pleasant and in some ways helpful around the house, but the relationship was empty. They co-existed like roommates sharing a house and some kids, but she was so neglected. Later on it came out. He was covering sin and did not want to deal with it. You cannot be married and be ambivalent toward your wife, just as you cannot be a follower of Christ and be ambivalent about him. You cannot be neutral about God. And that is why this is a command. God is calling us to draw near, knowing that the consequences of not drawing near are disastrous as we will see beginning in v.26. If you have real guilt, repent! What you are holding on to is not worth it. Go to Christ and don't let anything get in your way.

But, there is also imagined guilt. Imagined guilt feels like real guilt, but in reality, it is living under a burden that God never intended for you to carry. It is the weight of trying to pay for your own sin, or disbelieving the sufficiency of Christ. Go to Christ, run to Christ, flee to Christ, fall upon Christ, rest on Christ, trust Christ, he is enough – forever!

2. **Respond with a faith-driven obedience** (22) (gospel-intoxicated)

a. **Commitment** - *“with a true heart in full assurance of faith”*

“A true heart” speaks of an undivided heart, sincere and loyal heart. No masks, no pretending, no holding back, no hiding, no plan b, no looking back.

“Full assurance of faith” speaks of absolute confidence in the promises of God. Look at who Christ. Look at what Christ has done. Look at what Christ is going to do. Now, trust him – completely. Hand over the scepter of your life to the real King.

b. **Confession**

with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience

This commitment to Christ involves a confession of our sin. I take this phrase to be a reference back to 9.14 which speaks of the how Christ purified even our conscience. When we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us. This is why, even though we may have memories of sin, we can have a clear conscience because God chooses not to remember!

c. **Consecration**

And [with] our bodies washed with pure water

Is this baptism? It may be. The AH may be talking about the inward profession of faith in Christ and the public announcement of that through baptism. As true as that is, I am not convinced that baptism is in view here. I simply think that he is using Ezekiel’s promise language of the new covenant (that Jesus referenced in John 3) to speak of the total cleansing effect of Christ. The point is, your whole being is to draw near to God; mind and body, heart and soul, affections and dreams, all that you are is to be his.

What is holding you back from drawing near? Some of you need to come to Christ as Savior. Others of you need to reaffirm that by addressing some inconsistencies that mark your life.

Is it pride? Are you unwilling to admit the obvious?

Is it bitterness? Are you angry with God, or angry with someone else and you know that total surrender involves giving up your right to getting even, or even to be harsh?

Is it a relationship?

Is it a non-committal, live for myself life?

Is it your love of money?

Do you fear that God will ask of you something that is not for his glory and your good?