

Title: Inside Out
Text: Hebrews 13.10-12
Theme: The Centrality of Christ in the gospel and in all
Series: Hebrews #57
Prop Stmtnt: The exaltation of Christ is the primary means that God has ordained to bring himself glory.
Aim: I aim to help my people cherish Christ above all!

I normally get into the pulpit between 20 and 25 minutes after 11:00 and preach for about 50 minutes which means that we are usually dismissed around 12.15. I stopped wearing a watch because there is a little clock up here in the pulpit. Last Sunday, I was barely into my introduction when I noticed that the clock indicated that it was 10 minutes before noon! I assumed the clock was correct and yet in the midst of preaching could not reconcile how the time had gotten away from me like that. So, I eliminated a good amount of material that I had prepared and really attempted to communicate the big idea of the text without wearing you out completely. Finally, when the clock said 12:25, I quit. Only after the closing prayer did I see another clock that said it was barely past noon. So, for those of you who felt cheated last week, my sincere apologies and for those of you who never thought that I could be done at noon, I am sorry to have proved you wrong. Mostly, however I am sad for the fact that I believed that I left way too much in the oven that never got to the table or onto our plates. So, while the focus of the message will be on verses 10-12, I will go back to 7-9 to serve the rest of the meal.

Read Text:

Benjamin Franklin and Jonathan Edwards were born within 3 years of each other. Edwards died at 55, Franklin died in his middle 80's. Franklin is famous for his role as one of the founder's of our country, while Edwards is noted for his passion for the glory of God above all things. Franklin famously said, "God helps those who helps themselves." He published many of his writings under the heading of "The Way to Wealth" while Edwards' writings focused on eternal value. Franklin lived for this city, while Edwards showed us how to live for the city that is to come.

Edwards rightly pointed out that God does all things with an all-consuming passion for his own glory. For God to pursue anything else above his glory would be wrong and idolatrous. And yet, there is no conflict between God's passion for his glory and God's pursuit of our joy. In fact, God's pursuit of our joy is one of the means that God uses to show his passion for his glory. That is why, our pursuit of anything else other than the glory of God as our ultimate goal is destined to failure and will not satisfy. Think of this: God's passion for his glory is seen in the incarnation, humiliation, atoning death, vindicating resurrection, glorious ascension, and triumphant return of his Son Jesus Christ. In other words, the exaltation of Christ champions the glory of God. Christ shows us the

glories of God! Christ reveals the amazing attractiveness of God. God has made the supremacy of Christ above all things as the chief means by which God receives glory. The pivotal point and pinnacle act of God that brings all of this together is the cross. As Christ died, God's righteousness was vindicated, God's wrath was satisfied and sinners were justified, all in one decisive, amazing, jaw-dropping and glorious event.

History is full of conspiracy theories. But, the greatest conspiracy of them all was undertaken by God himself to destroy the curse of sin and to bring about the death of death in the death of Christ (to quote John Owen). Now, since the death of Christ was the pinnacle act and pivotal point in the plan of God as the demonstration of his glory that was undertaken for our good, it is only right and necessary for us to see how God set up everything before the incarnation and death of Christ to point to this.

That means that everything that God established in the Old Testament was ordained in order to point to Christ. The Old Testament laws including dietary restrictions pointed to Christ. The altar pointed to Christ. The tabernacle pointed to Christ. The sacrifices pointed to Christ. The holy days and festivals pointed to Christ. All of these were images that pointed to the reality that was to come. The reality is none other than the glorious and supremely magnificent God of glory made manifest in Christ, who was and is and is to come the Lord of Lord and King of Kings and who, like the Trinity of which he is part, is the great I AM, the unchanging, eternally existent, who will always be what he has always been. God has chosen to spread abroad throughout the entire universe the passion for his glory by exalting His Son Jesus Christ. This Jesus is therefore, the same yesterday, today and forever (v.8) and is the source of salvation, forgiveness, justification, sanctification, eternal life and eternal joy. All of this is yours, made available through Christ whose life and death in your place has made all of this possible. And it is yours, not for a price, nor based upon your performance, nor based upon your ethnicity, or family, or heritage. All of this is yours in Christ by grace alone. And since all that Christ procured was by grace alone, it can only be received by faith alone. Anyone who attempts to earn God's favor through merit, forfeits this grace because works-righteousness is nothing less than an attempt to steal the glory of God.

But what happened? What happened to these Hebrews? These were people who were ethnically Jewish, who, in contrast to other Jews, traded in the images for the Reality. The Jewish people as a whole put their trust in their images of the Reality and ended up trusting in the images instead of the Reality that they were designed to point to. So, when these Hebrews trusted in Christ, there was no longer any need to follow the images, when they had the Real One. But, because they stopped following the ceremonies of the images, they were facing persecution from their own "people" along with facing persecution from Rome. All of this was very tempting. In order to escape the persecution and the pressure, they just had to turn away from Christ and go back to the Jewish ceremonies.

Some of you have experience with this in a way. You were raised in a particular religious tradition that teaches a heretical view of the gospel. Like Judaism, you were taught to trust in your efforts, or to trust in your participation in church attendance, or in the accomplishing of ceremonies as part of the basis of earning God's favor. Some of you were taught to pray to icons and images, even saints and biblical persons who were related to Christ, instead of looking purely to Christ. Since you now understand the truth of the gospel, you are treated as if you are on the outside.

Now, let's stop here for just a second. Remember what I said earlier. **God established the Old Testament law and all of its components to point to Christ. They cannot replace Christ because they are not Christ. Therefore, when Christ came, he fulfilled all of these images and rendered them obsolete.** Years ago, Harrison Ford starred in a movie called, "Raiders of the lost Ark" whose plot centered on trying to find the Ark of the Covenant. What would happen if that piece of furniture was indeed found and someone touched it? ...Nothing! It is historically significant, but it has now been rendered obsolete.

For anyone to go back to them is to reject Christ, the 2nd person of the Trinity, which is a denial of God himself. Anything that replaces Christ, even if it, at one time, pointed to Christ, becomes an idol. That is what the warning in verse 9 is about. Don't go back to the image when you have the Reality – Christ Himself! The heart (our souls) is not strengthened by a special diet, even if that diet came from the Old Testament. The Old Covenant and its dietary restrictions pointed to Christ. Verse 10 says, (in essence) "We have the Reality Himself." There is nothing greater. To trust anything other than the Reality is to trust a fraud. And here is why. Look at what is ours now!

1. **Christ is ours now!** (10)

We have (right now) an altar. What is this altar? Well, what happened at the altar of the Tabernacle and Temple? The altar was the place where the sacrifices were made. Now, hang in here with me, because in these verses there are a couple of different aspects of the Old Testament law that are referred to because both of them point to Christ. Here, the text speaks about an altar, which was the place of sacrifice. So, obviously this altar is a reference to the death of Christ on the cross (which as we will see is made clear by verse 12) and is reminding us of all of the present and eternal benefits that have been secured by Christ and cannot be taken away.

That is why it is such a serious matter that people not be led away by diverse and strange teachings (9). Anything that attempts to replace the centrality of Christ does so to the destruction and damnation of those who the substitutes, because there is no salvation apart from grace alone received by faith alone in Christ alone. That is why verse 9 condemns the attempt at using food, diets, and by

implication our performance as a means to achieve spiritual favor with God or to put God into our debt.

Please notice what comes next in this text. (End of v.10) And I, of all people recognize the inherent uncomfortableness of what I am about to say, but it must be said because it is not being said often enough and because some of you do not yet understand this. Here is what I am talking about. When we look at this text, in fact, when we look at this entire book, we see that it champions the centrality and supremacy of Christ above all things. He is supreme because He ALONE has accomplished and secured our salvation. Now, most, if not just about all of you will agree with me on that point – at least to some degree. But, there is another edge on that sword, that is, another side to that coin – and that is this. If, or since Christ is the altar, (the offering and the offerer who procured our salvation), then any teaching that attempts to diminish the work of Christ by adding to it any form or works of righteousness, or anyone who believes that their efforts, or their sufferings, or their religious devotion earns them any form of credit, is wrong! Dead wrong! Sincere devotion to works righteousness, sincere, life-long commitment to earning God's favor through religious tradition and faithfulness is nothing less than attempting to steal the glory from God by attempting to take credit for something that you cannot accomplish. And people who believe that their religious traditions will save them are not followers of Christ and are condemned, no matter how nice they are. They need the gospel, which is good news because no matter how nice they are, they, you and me are never nice enough. We are totally and completely dependent upon the mercy of God which was put on display through Christ when he died completely in your place.

The author of Hebrews is pointing out that Christ (and all that he secured for us) is ours now! The only way he is ours is by faith alone. And the only reason why he is ours is because we have trusted in him alone and not in him plus our good works, religious ceremonies, or moral superiority to others. Do you see what this verse does? This verse makes a logical and necessary connection. It says there are those who have an altar and it says that there are those who have no right to eat (participate) at this altar.

Again, remember the audience of this book – Hebrews! Their ethnic and historic condition makes it very tempting to trust in their adherence to the OT law as the basis for their acceptance. But does this verse do? It draws a line and establishes a point of separation by going back and showing us the point, the imagery, the reason for some of the Old Testament laws.

When sacrifices were brought to the tabernacle, there were procedures that God had established for those offerings. The entire system screamed of separation. Sin polluted the people and atonement had to be made or else the guilty would be separated from the rest of the nation and placed outside of the camp. If, the guilty were not separated from the rest, then their spiritual pollution would contaminate the rest of the people. (Achan - Joshua 7) Atonement was made

through a sacrifice. When certain sacrifices were made, the Levites (tribe of priests) were permitted to eat the meat from those sacrifices. But again, only certain ones were permitted to do that, all else were separated from that. Here, in v.10, the AH is using that imagery to make a very telling point. Notice the language. **“We have an altar from which *those who serve the tent have no right to eat.*”** Whoa! Did you get that? Those who serve the tent – who’s that? That is a reference in the Old Testament context to the priests. But here it states that the priests have no right to eat. What is he talking about? The priests were the only ones who HAD the right to eat! What is he saying? He is making a huge point! “Those who serve the tent”, is now referring to those who are still participating in the sacrificial system that was established under the Old Testament law and trusting in it for their forgiveness and pardon. Here is the point. If you trust in anything, other than Christ, even if it is the sacrificial system that pointed to Christ, or even if it is current ceremonies designed to reflect some aspect of Christ, if you trust in them instead of trusting in Christ – you are cut off from Christ. Christ is ours right now! Accept no substitutes and make no compromises. You cannot add anything to Christ and the gospel without taking away from the sufficiency of Christ and distorting the gospel. When you do that, you have another gospel, which is NOT the gospel. The next two verses build on this by pointing out that...

2. Christ fulfilled and replaced the images and ceremonies. (11-12)

If we are going to understand verse 11, we have to understand Leviticus 16 and the Day of Atonement Holy-Day for the nation of Israel. The Day of Atonement Holy-Day, was the only day in the entire year, when the high priest was permitted to go into the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. The nation would gather as one people and the priest would offer a sacrifice for his own sins (11-14). Then the priest would offer one of two goats as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. He would kill the goat and take its blood and sprinkle it on the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant as an offering for the sins of the people. Then the priest would come back out from the Holy of Holies and would lay his hands on the second goat in an act that would transfer the guilt of the people onto this live goat. This goat (where we get the word scapegoat from) would then be chased outside of the camp, and out into the desert. What happened at the Day of Atonement, is an amazing picture of the gospel. The goat that died was an illustration of propitiation. Propitiation refers to what happens to the wrath of God against sin. Propitiation is the removal of God’s wrath, or the turning aside of God’s wrath because his justice has been satisfied, thereby setting loose the favor of God. The second goat illustrated expiation. While propitiation refers to what happens to God’s wrath, expiation refers to what happens to man’s sin. The second goat, which was carrying the sins of the people was chased outside of the camp, meaning, the sins of the people were removed from them. They were purged, forgiven or expiated.

So, when we say that Christ fulfilled the images and the ceremonies and the sacrifices, you can see here a glorious example of how carefully God planned out our redemption. The death of Christ is like the death of the first goat in that his violent death, through the shedding of his blood, satisfied the infinite wrath of God against our sin and since he suffered and died outside of the camp, his death also fulfilled the imagery of the second goat and accomplished the removal of our guilt. But think of what God was doing in the designing of, ordering of the Old Testament Day of Atonement. If you were there, watching the priest transfer your sin upon this animal who died in your place, would you not realize how serious your sin is that God would demand an entire holy-day for this one event to which the entire nation was commanded to gather? Would you not wonder, how could someone else die in my place, how could the death of this animal satisfy the wrath of God? And when you realized that this second goat was charged with, imputed with, credited with all your sin and all of the sin of the nation, how would you view this goat? This goat was now guilty, vile, polluted, contaminated and defiled, was he not?

Two things that I want you to consider. 1) The Day of Atonement ritual was established by God as a TEMPORARY ceremony to prepare people for the PERMANENT and All-Sufficient death of Christ. The Day of Atonement ritual had to be repeated every year because it was never good enough to be a final payment. Only one could do that – and that was Christ. 2) The death of Christ, was THE DAY of ATONEMENT to which all of these other days pointed. To go back now and repeat the Day of Atonement ceremony would be a denial of the sufficiency of Christ. Look at v.12.

3. Christ Accomplished our Redemption (12)

Like the first goat, Christ's death was the propitiation for our sin. It is like this. Imagine that you are standing one hundred yards away from a dam that is 10,000 miles wide and 10,000 miles high, holding back the furious water of judgment against your sin. And then, the dam breaks loose and this indescribable torrent of water comes thundering at you and just before you are destroyed by it, the ground in front of you opens up revealing a chasm without a bottom and all of the water that was rushing toward you now pours into the chasm and you are left standing. Christ, is the chasm.

My hope is in the Lord, who gave himself for me and paid the price of all my sin at Calvary.

No merit of my own his anger to suppress. My only hope is found in Jesus righteousness.

His grace has planned it all, tis mine but to believe and recognize his work of love and Christ receive!

And now for me he stands before the Father's throne. He shows his wounded hands and names me as his own.

For me, he died, for me, he lives and everlasting life and light he freely gives.

I titled this message, "inside out." Here is why. This truth sits at the heart of this book and as the foundation of all of these commands. Christ was credited with all of our guilt and died as the vile, defiled, and condemned sacrifice in my place. He died, rejected. He died, scorned. He died "outside the camp." He died as the one, from whom we hid our faces. Our pardon was purchased by his embarrassing death. Christ is an embarrassment in the eyes of this world. Those who follow him are an embarrassment in the eyes of this world. (v.3) Remember those who are an embarrassment in the eyes of this world and stand with them. Remember your leaders who were an embarrassment because they followed Christ (7) and recognize that when you follow Christ, you will be an embarrassment to this world, sometimes to your family. Stop looking for the approval or respect of this world. We are called to (13) go to Christ outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.

The people of God, the true people of God, the church sits outside the camp, out with the lepers, out with the outcasts, out with the despised, out with the unlearned, the unrefined, the uncouth, uneducated and unaccepted. But, in reality, those who are out are in. Rejected by the world, we are accepted by God. Rejected now, accepted forever, for here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

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