

## **Let Us (The Tossed Salad of Hebrews) 01-05-03**

Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:22-25

Last week we looked at the little word 'let'. We saw that it is usually implied by the verb tense. We also saw how important it is for us to consider it carefully each time we read it in Scripture. We are to let our light shine, let our ears hear, let peace rule our hearts, let the Word dwell in us richly, let ourselves keep in step with the Spirit. Conversely we are not to let sin reign in our lives. All of those are great expressions of eternal truth to guide us through this New Year, through this life.

Today I'd like for us to take a look at some of the "let us" passages in Hebrews. Because Hebrews has more "let us" passages than any other book in the Bible, I'm calling today's message 'The Tossed Salad of Hebrews'. We don't know who the author of Hebrews was with any certainty. The frequent use of "let us" was one of his unique patterns. In last week's message we saw that most of the passages with the word "let" were in the aorist active imperative tense of a verb. In Hebrews almost every case is the present subjunctive. That means it called on the historical reader to consider the possibility and potential of acting according to the suggestion.

I'm intentionally going to skip 4:11 leaving it for the time when we return to our study in Joshua. So, let us begin with Heb. 4:14-16 (NIV) <sup>14</sup> *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.* <sup>15</sup> *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.* <sup>16</sup> *Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

**Commented [PW1]:** <sup>11</sup> Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.  
Heb 4:11 (NIV)

Verse 14 has two unique descriptions of Christ. Nowhere else in the New Testament do we have Jesus referred to as a great high priest. Nowhere else is the phrase "Jesus the Son of God" used. The ideas are certainly present throughout Scripture, but these expressions are unique. "Since we have a great high priest..." What is on the mind of the Hebrew readers? They had a high priest who would go into the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement to sprinkle the blood of a lamb on the Mercy Seat. We have a great high priest, a final eternal high priest, who is ever before God with the marks that paid for our redemption. He has gone through the heavens. That may mean He ascended through our heaven and the heaven above to the right hand of God. Another way to look at it is to see that heaven itself cannot contain Him. He is omnipresent and yet He became a man named Jesus, the very Son of God. Since our great High Priest Jesus is before God on our behalf, we should lay hold of the faith we profess. Here is our first type of "let us". Let us cling to, hold tightly, get a grip on the faith we profess. We talk about it, but is it something we cling to? We profess to be Christians but how tight are our hands wrapped around our faith? Do we hold it loosely? Jesus is at the right hand of God! He is inheriting all things. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess He is

Master of all. Let us hold firmly the faith that we profess! If you cashed your paycheck you cling to your wallet. You are careful that no one will take it from your grip. The treasure we have in Christ is worth more than every paycheck ever paid. Do you guard it as carefully? Are you clinging to it or holding it loosely?

Now remember this is in the subjunctive case. It is full of possibility and potentiality. It is saying that since this is who Christ is, and what He is doing then we should, we ought to, hold firmly to the faith that we profess. The implication is that if we do not, we will face the consequences. Jesus deserves no less than our tightly clinging to our faith. The next two verses go on to tell us why.

Verse 15 says this High Priest is able to sympathize with our weakness. The Greek word for sympathy, *sunpatheo*, literally means 'to feel with us'. Consider the fact that it doesn't take a lot of temptation on the Devil's part before we give in. We rarely face more than a light to medium attack before we stumble. Then consider to what extent was Jesus tempted? Since He never gave in, you know the Devil threw everything he had at Him. Who knows the deepest depth of temptation like Jesus? So when you are tempted, who can understand you best? When we wonder if anyone has ever gone through the despair we are feeling, who do you know whom you can turn to who has surely known greater depths? That's right, Jesus. He's been there. He's experienced it from your perspective as a human being.

John Foster wrote of coming home one day in the 1930s to see his daughter crying in front of the radio. He heard the news commentator say, "The Japanese tanks have entered Canton." To most people it was a distant affair that had little affect on their lives. So why was Mr. Foster's daughter crying? She was born there. Her Nanny was still there. Her young friends were still there. In a similar way when you are hurting, there is someone who sheds tears with you. You see, Jesus was born here. He knows us personally. He's been here and felt the depths of pain and temptation you feel. Yet, through it all, He never sinned. He's the only One who can guide you through by His own example.

Verse 16 goes on to say *Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* Since Jesus knows the extent of need, since He has gone through the heavens as our Great High Priest, let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence. If I had some fallen priest who was as sinful as myself representing me to the Father, I would come with fear and trepidation before the Holy God. But that is not the case. I have a sinless perfect Great High Priest who has paid the full penalty and has the receipt stamped in His wrists and side. Let us approach God – 10:22 says Let us draw near to God. Why? For what purpose are we to approach Him? *So that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* We come knowing that He understands our weakness. We come knowing what a great high priest He is. We know we will find mercy and grace to help us in our hour of need. Those are the two things we need the most. What more could we ask?

**Commented [PW2]:** <sup>22</sup> let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Heb 10:22 (NIV)

That is two kinds of 'let us'. The first was let us cling to the faith we profess. The second was let us approach the throne of grace with confidence. The third I mentioned along with the second. Let us draw near to God. We'll read the full passage, Heb. 10:19-25 (NIV) <sup>19</sup> *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,* <sup>20</sup> *by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,* <sup>21</sup> *and since we have a great priest over the house of God,* <sup>22</sup> *let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.* <sup>23</sup> *Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.* <sup>24</sup> *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

<sup>25</sup> *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

In verses 19-21 the author again reminds us of our Great High Priest. He speaks of how totally adequate His blood is to cover our sins. The new and living way into the Holy of Holies is not through a curtain of material but through the torn body of Jesus, our sacrificial lamb. So since we have this High Priest - LET US - draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith. We can be completely assured that God will accept us because of our High Priest and His sacrifice. That torn body says, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." No wonder I can confidently enter the holy place.

Then the author uses the terms that Jews who saw the daily temple service understood well. He says we have our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience. The priest would sprinkle the blood of the daily sacrifice on the sides of the altar. Our heart is the new altar and the blood is the blood of Christ. It is His blood that sanctifies the altar and the gift. He goes on to say that our bodies are washed with pure water. The priest would ceremonially cleanse himself at the laver in the Court of Women before he would go to the altar to participate in the sacrifices. It symbolized the cleansing of the priest. The water of the Word of God cleanses not just our outward bodies, but it renews our mind and desires. He is describing to us a fulfillment of the picture that the priests of old represented. They were just a shadow of what would one day be a reality when believers' hearts were sprinkled with the sacrifice acceptable to God, the blood of Jesus, and our desires cleansed by the water of the Word. The implied consequences of not drawing near are not being cleansed. If we avoid God's presence, our hearts and lives will go on being corrupted by the world to our own detriment.

So since we are the true priests of God who draw near to Him, who minister to Him in the real temple, that temple made up of living stones, LET US - hold unswervingly to the hope we profess. He told us earlier to cling to our faith, and now he tells us to cling to our hope for He who promised is faithful. What did He promise? He promised to finish the work He started in us. He promised to make us into the image of His Son. Let us hang on tightly to that hope! The One who promised is always faithful to keep His promises.

LET US consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds. Do you consider that? Have you ever thought, "How can I help that person express the life of Christ?" The best way to spur one another on is to be an example. There are some very loving and giving people in this fellowship. Their example should spur all of us on to be more like Christ in love and good deeds. Imagine if we all took this to heart? If we were all spurring one another on to love and good deeds, the word about what God was doing at Wayside would soon spread! Everyone wants to be at a church like that. Let's pray that every life giving church is full of people that spur one another on to love and good deeds.

Let us not give up meeting together. It was a problem back then and it is a problem now. There are a number of different reasons that a person may decide he does not need to gather with others to worship. The one I find most common is an attitude of pride. They say, "The preacher is not feeding me. The music is not worshipful enough. The people are insincere." Perhaps, but everyone in Christ is a member of a body and a body part by itself is a horrible sight. Sheep don't live in flocks of one. If the Lord has you in an immature church, perhaps it is so that you can help it mature by sharing your gifts. We handicap the body by finding churches we like instead of finding where God has called us to minister.

I have never seen a mature church. I'm sure there are some, but this side of heaven I guarantee you they are not perfect. Every member is there to build up the others. That means you need to grow, and you can help me grow. One way we do that is by enduring the weaknesses of one another. Through patience with one another's faults we learn what God is like as He deals with us. It is easier to ignore corporate worship, but you will not grow as you should or exercise the gifts God means for you to use.

If the preacher uses the word of God and you are not getting something from it, it is because your heart is hard. The Holy Spirit has you where you are, hearing the Scripture that is being shared, because He has something to say to you through it. The preacher may not be the most gifted person. His point may not be the one that the Holy Spirit is making to you, but if you recognize the sovereignty of God, look for what the Spirit of God is saying to you in the Word.

Some would worship before their television set with one of the great preachers of today. Good, but it is not gathering with the saints. You can't invest your time helping the younger saints. You can't mentor the new believer. You can't exercise your patience and love toward the weak or share your gifts from your Living Room sofa. It is easier and more entertaining, but who said our spiritual life is about ease and entertainment? The Bible teaches just the opposite.

Some refuse to gather together because they have been wounded in the past. I would never downplay the pain from one believer hurting another, but we need to forgive and move on. When we break fellowship over it, Satan has won two victories. We have refused to forgive and love our offending brother, and we have

isolated ourselves from the place God wants us to be to heal us. In fellowship with other believers is where we will grow the most and become the most effective for the Kingdom of God. Isolation is easier but not the best thing for you or the body. So, let us not give up worshipping together.

The second half of this verse mentions one of the benefits of fellowship. Let us encourage one another. Do you get any encouragement to stay close to the Lord when you are out in the world? Just the opposite, the world pulls you away from the Lord and brings you down. You need fellowship for encouragement to stay after God. I like to illustrate this affect with a coal. We use wood to heat our home in winter. In the morning the wood has burned down into a bunch of scattered coals. If I leave it like that, all the coals will die. If I pile them together, the heat increases and all the coals burn better. We stoke one another's fire when we are together. Someone is led to fast and pray. That encourages another person to do the same. Someone memorizes a Scripture and shares it. That encourages others to do the same. This is the same idea we mentioned in verse 24. We provoke one another to love and good works.

Then the author writes that the more we see things winding down to the beginning of the end-times, we should encourage one another all the more. The prophecies predict a falling away at the very end of time. We will need to encourage one another so we will not be a part of that falling away.

Let us review the "let us" passages that we have gone over this morning. There are 6 more in Hebrews that we may take up at another time. But today we have been encouraged to hold firmly to our faith and our hope, to approach the throne of grace with confidence, to draw near to God, to consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds, to encourage one another in the faith, and to not give up meeting together. We often think, "Yeah, yeah, I'm doing those things", but are we? Would a guest describe us as a group of Christians that hold firmly to our faith, that approach the throne of grace with confidence, that draw near to God, that spur each other on to love and good deeds, encouraging one another? Have we let little things keep us from assembling regularly to worship?

Remember the verb mood of most of these expressions is subjunctive. If we don't something will or will not happen. It is not clearly stated, but the book of Hebrews is a warning against forsaking the faith. It is warning not to backslide into a meaningless life of worldliness. Therefore, let us... We can hold our hope and faith tightly or let them slip. We can draw near to God or be drawn from Him. We can meet together and encourage one another with words and examples or we can isolate ourselves and become weak ineffective Christians. This year let us draw nearer to God than ever before. This year let us help one another grow by sharing our gifts in love. This year let us be a church that encourages one another to go further and deeper in our relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ. The choice is simple, closer to our Lord or further from Him. Let us draw near!

