

“Disrupting Hope”
Message by DD Adams
Kemptown Providence U.M. Church
26th Sunday After Pentecost
November 18, 2018

The New Testament lesson is from the book of Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 19 through 25. ¹⁹ Brothers and sisters, we have confidence that we can enter the holy of holies by means of Jesus’ blood, ²⁰ through a new and living way that he opened up for us through the curtain, which is his body, ²¹ and we have a great high priest over God’s house.

²² Therefore, let’s draw near with a genuine heart with the certainty that our faith gives us, since our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies are washed with pure water. ²³ Let’s hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, because the one who made the promises is reliable.

²⁴ And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. ²⁵ Don’t stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near. This is God’s word for God’s people.

Please pray with me. God sharpen our listening and help us to let go of distractions that steal our focus. God is faithful in all things, so let’s let go of our fears and choose to believe your promises instead of what we see around us. May

the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Did you ever wake up in the middle of the night and get hijacked from your sleep? Everyone has. We're sleeping soundly and boom, we're awake. We've been stolen and captured in our sleep because somehow—fear entered in. The hopeful dreams and God's promises no longer have our attention. Now stopping there, let's take a look at the context of Hebrews.

In A.D. 49, the Roman Emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome. In A.D. 64, the Emperor Nero persecuted them. They suffered, their faith wavered, and they were tempted to abandon their faith and return to their old way of living, and that meant leaving Christ out.

The unknown author of Hebrews encourages them to “hold fast to their confession in Christ as Savior and Lord” (Heb. 4:14, 10:23). But they want give up. They're not sure this faith walk is worth all the hassle, but the fact is, the real benefit to most things comes when we stick with it.

A few years ago a man began attending Providence. He was going through some hard times and was tempted to give up on Christ and go back to his old way of life. He asked me if I knew anyone like him, someone coming from a difficult place in life, who stuck it out and kept following Christ. I said yes, I did know some. Clearly, he didn't know what most of us know now and what we've gone

through. Just like him, some of us have been tempted to abandon our faith, but choose not to.

It does take a lot of perseverance to follow Christ. Just starting out as a follower, some will look at what Christ offers and then wonder, “Is it worth it?” The goal is to stick with it, but statistics say that only 20% of those who join the church continue, and pastors, after 7 years of ministry give up.

We need to be long-haul Christians. Verse 24 says, “And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don’t stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing.” It’s true, attending church regularly does help to stay connected and to hold on. Let me read it again. “Hold on to the confession of [your] hope without wavering, because the one who made the promises is reliable.”

To “hold on” is difficult. It means we don’t give up or give in no matter what, but hardships *can* and do get in the way. For example, sickness, losing a loved one, losing a job, losing children, divorce, getting married again, or depression; it’s hard to hold on to God in times of trouble. I’m not telling you all something you’re not aware of, but the question is this. How do I hold on to Christ when times get really hard? We’ve already talked about getting to church regularly and having fellowship, and all that’s important, but what do you do by yourself when you worship God?

Verse 23 speaks of hope, “Hold on to the confession of [your] hope . . .” but fear come in and disturbs that hope. Long nights that steal your sleep when fear enters in. What—about—firing back and *using hope* to silence the fear? We speak a confession of hope in Christ, *it never wavers* and promises reliability. So, maybe we change up our prayers and engage in silence with God and listen deeply?

Reverend Dr. Kirk Byron Jones was the Central Md.’s speaker for the Pre-Advent Day Apart with Bishop LaTrelle Easterling this last week. Rev. Jones spoke about going into that reservoir in our heart where there’s a limitless source of peace and joy. We engage our soul and have a sustained and deliberate dialogue with God or we just enjoy His presence. We listen deeply, and we don’t run away.

With the many hardships in life fear is an enemy to be dealt with, but the soul, who is the God-most part of you doesn’t and will never know fear. So in that deep listening we come to realize just how loved we really are, and we begin to live to God *FROM* acceptance *NOT for* acceptance.

Psalm 46:10 reads, “Be still, be calm . . .” It’s in the deep listening we have no role, no care, we’re not thinking, not remembering, not wanting, but we’re holding the peace of God that doesn’t waver, and it evokes peace and joy. In deep listening to God, we listen to understand not to respond. It’s in that space we’re transparent because “. . . our soul will never tell another soul. Your soul will never judge you, so be gentle with yourself because your soul is gentle with you.”

“God is our refuge and strength, a help always near in times of great trouble. That’s why we won’t be afraid when the world falls apart, when the mountains crumble into the center of the sea, when its waters roar and rage, when the mountains shake because of its surging waves” (Ps 46:1-3). Though our Christian life is filled with the brokenness of mistakes and wrong choices, we choose to cling to God and continue to enjoy major comebacks filled with peace and hope from God that disrupts fear.

Take heart people of God for God is with you, ever-present, all-knowing and all-powerful. Let the confession of your hope disrupt your fear and let it silence everything around you but God. Let it be so God. Let it be so. Amen.