

Transfiguration 2/7/16
Hebrews 3:1-6 C

THEREFORE, HOLY BROTHERS, YOU WHO SHARE IN A HEAVENLY CALLING, CONSIDER JESUS, THE APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST OF OUR CONFESSION.

Do you know who you are? The writer of Hebrews tells you who you are – the holy brothers. You are the holy brothers of Jesus Christ, not because your good intentions, not because you do a good deed every day, not because you are a nicer guy than your neighbor. No, you are a holy brother because of Jesus, because He died to forgive you all your sins, made you holy, sanctified you, and called you to be a little lamb of His flock.

And because you are a holy brother, you share in a heavenly calling, which means that this earth is not your home. You are a stranger here. Your citizenship is in heaven. All the blessings and treasures and joys of heaven are yours.

Because of sin, your earthly body is perishable. One day, you will breathe your last and your eternal soul will separate from your perishable body and your natural body will be laid to rest in the earth. But on that day that Jesus comes in all His glory, your perishable body will be raised imperishable, your mortal body will put on immortality, and your imperishable, immortal body will be re-united with your soul, and body and soul together, you will enter into the blessings and treasures and joys of heaven, and you will be with Jesus, forever to be where Jesus is. You will hunger no more, thirst no more, the sun will not bear down on you, and God will wipe every tear from your eye. And, you will rest from all your earthly struggles in the bosom of Jesus, forever, and ever, without end.

This is your heavenly calling. And this heavenly calling is your confidence and the hope in which you boast. You have that confidence and you can boast in that hope regardless of your circumstances today.

That is the good news that the writer of Hebrews is writing to the Christians he originally wrote his letter to and to us today. The letter to the Hebrews was written to people facing intense persecution. Christianity was an illegal religion. Judaism, however, was a legal religion. In the face of these severe persecutions, many in the congregation were tempted to renounce Christianity and go back to Judaism. So, the writer of the book writes to them to remind them they are holy brothers and encourage them to hold fast to Jesus.

No one really needs to tell you to do that, do they, Dear Saint of God. No, we don't face physical persecution – we are not thrown in jail or feed to wild animals because we believe in Jesus. But ... but... We had a great discussion last Sunday in Bible class in this realm. Whether it's just the society and culture in which we live, or even the secular courts and civil government, it just seems, more and more, that we live in an ever-increasing anti-Christian climate, where we Christians are told more and more, shut up and go home.

And, it's not just the culture in which we live. Every ache and every pain and every medicine you take is a reminder of that your body is perishable. Every sorrow, and heartache, and tear is a reminder that you live in a world cursed by sin. Those golden years, may not be so golden, after all. The devil, the world, your own flesh will use these struggles to rattle your confidence and your hope in Jesus

So, consider Jesus. He is the one and only one who can give you everything you need so that you can hold fast to your confidence and boast in the hope of heaven.

In fact, that's what He's doing when He takes Peter, James, John up on the mountain to pray. Peter, James, and John are just like you. They are holy brothers, holding fast to their confidence and boasting in their hope of the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. And just like you, they have that confidence and hope in a jar of clay.

You remember what happened just before the Transfiguration. Peter makes that marvelous confession that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus tells the Twelve that He will "Go to Jerusalem and suffer many things ... and be killed, and on the third day be raised." And Peter corrected Jesus. That's right, Peter, in the folly of his human reason, thought that when Jesus talked of His upcoming passion and death and resurrection, the Son of God made a mistake. So, Jesus corrects Peter -- No, the cross will come your way, just as it comes my way.

So in the effort to strengthen them and us as well, Jesus takes us upon this high mountain. And there, upon this high mountain, Jesus gives us what we need to hold fast to our confidence and boast in our hope. He gives us a glimpse of His glory. His face altered and His clothes became dazzling white. And with our human eyes, we get a glimpse into where our confidence and hope end – looking at Jesus in all His glory for all eternity.

Does it really work? Does it really help to see a glimpse of Jesus in His glory and the glory that waits us? The answer is: yes. Peter, in his 2nd Epistle, points us back to the transfiguration

“We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. for when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from the mountain, for we were with him on the holy mountain” (2 Pe 1).

Consider Jesus. Consider how qualified Jesus is to give you that confidence and hope. He is the one sent to you from God with God’s authority. He comes to give you confidence and boast in your hope. He comes to be our High Priest to offer the once-for-all sacrifice for sin.

Consider Jesus as He goes to Calvary’s cross. There He is carrying on His own body, every miserable, terrible, bad thing you have said or done or thought and all the good, God-pleasing things that you have not done. He carries them all in His body as He is nailed to the cross and as He bleeds and dies for you. Our High Priest sacrifices the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world upon that cross. Ponder that for a moment: Jesus sacrifices Himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for all your sins. He dies for you and He rises for you, and because He does, all of your sins are forgiven.

And that sacrifice does something else as well – it renders silent and defeats your enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. And it breaks their hold on you, so that they can not hold you in terror anymore; they cannot frighten you; they cannot unsettle you.

Consider Jesus. He is uniquely qualified as the High Priest of your faith to give you all the help that you need to hold fast you confidence and boast in your hope. Consider Jesus as He takes all of His love and forgiveness as he unites it to the water and the Word, the bread and wine

with His Body and Blood, the Word – preached and heard, and makes all His love and forgiveness your very own in these means of grace.

As that love and forgiveness become your very own, you become who you are – the holy brothers. You receive your heavenly calling. And you have confidence and you boast in that great hope, the confidence and hope of the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Remember and ponder that, Dear Child of God, when danger, problems, hardships, or uncertainty come. Consider Jesus, hold fast to you confidence and hope in Him, because He'll give you all the help you need.