

Draw Near (Heb 10)

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 27th Jan 2013

Intro

- Do you want to draw near to God? Today we will look at what is 'drawing near to God', what it isn't, why we should do it, and how we should do it. We will also look at three implications that drawing near to God should have on our lives. Our passage for all of this will be Heb 10.

Read Hebrews 10:19 – 25

Draw near to God –v 22

What is drawing near? It's a choice we make

- v22 'Let us draw near'
- This is a choice that we make. We need to make a decision to draw near to God rather than being passive. There is a form of the verb in Hebrew called the Jussive- it appears many times in the book of Psalms 'Let us bow before the Lord our maker' etc. Although this passage was written in Greek it is using the same principle of admonishing God's people to make a choice. This is what a worship leader does- admonished the people to make a choice to draw near to God in worship. Life-change happens when we truly make a decision and stick to it, burning our bridges behind us- 'we are committed Houston'. Jer 29:13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

What isn't drawing near?- Legalism

- Let's not deceive ourselves we are drawing near if we are not- everything we do should come from trying to be right with God but from an understanding that He has made us right with God by what He has done for us.
- v20 'by a new and living way'- Writer of Hebrews has shown that the old way of the law of Moses was just a picture of what Christ would do – high priest once a year – Holy of Holies through huge curtain to offer sacrifices for his own sin and the Israelites. The Holy of Holies was a copy of that which is the reality; heaven. The high priest was only a copy of that which is the reality; which is Christ. Even the things which were in the Holy of Holies were copies of the reality of Jesus. Jesus is the curtain which opened up. He is the sacrifice given for our sins – it was His own blood which was shed. He is our perfect high priest, our perfect representative before God the Father.
- V20 'New and living way '-i.e. not the old way of ritual and symbols which cannot impart life, but the new way of Christ who is our life.
A Television studio can be made to look like a holiday destination in the Bahamas. However would you want to spend your holiday in a television studio or at the real place the Bahamas?
The people reading Hebrews were tempted to settle for something which wasn't the reality of Christ. They were being tempted to go back into observing rituals to get right with God when the reality of Christ had already been shown them.
- This can be a temptation today, thinking that coming to Church is enough, going through the motions of worship, reading the Bible, praying, but never surrendering to Christ trusting Him alone for salvation.
- If you are trusting in any resources other than Christ then repent earnestly before God and place your faith wholly in Him. Humanism is faith in mankind. Are we placing our trust in mankind, in our own efforts?
- Paul said 'I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my flesh' Rom 7:18. Have

we come to that place of conviction of sin then we realise that without God's mercy we are lost?

Why? Because we have access

- There is a reason why we should draw near to God—V 19 'since' (NIV) or 'therefore' (NKJV)— look at what it's 'there for':
- The way is open to the very Holy of Holies by Jesus death on the cross for us. There is no barrier between us and God!
- The Holy of Holies was the very presence of God, the holiest place on earth. We have access people in the Old Testament could only dream of. The only person who could go into the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament was the high priest, and then only once a year.
- But now, because of Jesus, every single Christian, old and young, new believer or mature believer can enter that very room as often as we choose. We have an Open Heaven always!
- The point the writer of the Hebrews is making is that, as we have access, it would be crazy not to use it!

Have you ever had a privilege you have not used? So often when we have privileges in life we don't always make the most of them, living near beautiful mountains and scenery ideal for walks.

One day a chicken found an egg and sat on it until it hatched. The chicken had no idea the egg was an eagle egg, abandoned for some reason. That's how an eagle came to be born into a family of chickens. While the eagle is the greatest of all birds, soaring above the heights with grace and ease, the chicken doesn't even know how to fly. In fact, some chickens are so lowly that they eat rubbish. Predictably, the little eagle, being raised in a family of chickens, thought he was a chicken. He walked around, ate rubbish, and clucked like a chicken. One day he looked up to see a majestic eagle soar through the air, dipping and turning. When he asked his family what it was, they responded, "It's an eagle. But you could never be like that because you are just a chicken." Then they returned to pecking the rubbish. The eagle spent his whole life looking up at eagles, longing to join them among the clouds. It never once occurred to him to lift his wings and try to fly. The eagle died thinking he was just a chicken

- **Application-** enjoy God's presence, alone and when we meet together, don't hold back, but enter in.

How? Sincerely

- -v22 Choose *sincerely* (NIV) to draw near to God- 'with a true heart' (NKJV).
- With a sincere heart –sincere originates from the words 'without wax' – ancient busts which had imperfections were covered over with wax to hide the imperfections, it gave a false impression.
- Don't just pretend/act it – hypocrite = actor – mask wearer. Our worship of God is to be from the heart, the best we can give, not eyes closed and hands raised whilst going through our 'to do list' in our minds, but our all focused on God.

A rather pompous, self-righteous Sunday School teacher was trying to make the point that good Christians don't keep their faith a secret. With her head held high, the teacher strutted impressively back and forth across the room. She asked, "Now, class, why do you think people call me a Christian?" The room was silent for a moment. Then one of the boys slowly raised his hand and said, "Probably because they don't know you."

- With the *heart* (NKJV)- this is talking about a surrender of our very hearts to God. It is an ongoing handing over our very lives to God- picking up our cross of surrender daily and following Him.

Three implications of drawing near:

Drawing near means dealing with guilt- v 22 having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience

- In his short story "The Capitol of the World," Ernest Hemingway tells the story of a Spanish father and his teenage son. The relationship between this father and son became strained and eventually shattered. When the rebellious son—whose name was Paco, a common Spanish name—ran away from home, his father began a

long and arduous search to find him. As a last resort, the exhausted father placed an ad in a Madrid newspaper, hoping that his son would see the ad and respond to it. The ad read, Dear Paco, Please meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon. All is forgiven. Love, Father. As Hemingway tells the story, the next day at noon, in front of the newspaper office, there were 800 Pacos, all seeking forgiveness from their fathers. (From "The Capital of the World" from *The Short Stories*, Ernest Hemingway, Scribner, 1995.)

- Do you feel guilty? It's probably because you are! However, through the gospel our guilt has been dealt with by God our Father and now we can know peace with Him. It is when we forget the truth of the gospel that feelings of guilt cause us to doubt God's forgiveness and even our salvation-v22 'Full assurance of faith ', v23 'Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering'– i.e. don't give way to this– choose full assurance!
We put our trust in our insurance policy that if we have an accident that it will pay out – how much more can we place our faith in Christ Who is our assurance policy! Have you ever doubted your salvation? Have you ever doubted that God has forgiven you of your sins? Has there been a sin in your life which particularly makes you think that you're still under God's condemnation? 'There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' -Rom 8:1
- Sometimes feelings of guilt can lead people to performance mentality. Death row prisoner keeping his cell spotless. obsessional house tidying. Ritualism cannot take away our guilt as this book makes it clear. However Christ can. This is because we know deep down that despite our ability to go through the motions of religious practise, or good deeds, they cannot take away our bad deeds and we do not deserve to be forgiven, we are guilty. Death row guy -'I deserve to die for what I have done'.
- However, our forgiveness is not based upon our religious deeds or ability to perform them but it is based on a person, it is based on Christ's faithfulness and mercy. And we know that Christ is faithful and He is merciful- v23
- Satan can even use some passages of scripture to knock our assurance- he tried to twist scripture with Jesus. A little further on in this passage in verse 26 it says 'if we keep on sinning ' – this is not referring to the Christian who falls into sin, but a deliberate decision to turn our backs on Christ. It is paralleled with verse 28 which says 'anyone who rejected the law of Moses ' – it is a warning against rejecting the work of Christ. The Christians at this time were tempted to go back into the law of Moses, back into Judaism, rather than continue as Christians. This does not mean that if someone backslides that they cannot be saved, but rather that only the cross of Christ is sufficient to save us and that we need to continue what we have started rather than throw our faith away.
- 'Once saved always saved' does not mean we don't need to persevere, what it means is that those who are truly saved will either persevere in the faith, or if they fall away at some point they will return to the place of faith in Christ- choose to persevere in faith and don't doubt your salvation or God's forgiveness- He died for us to receive His forgiveness, let's not throw it back in His face.
- The way to deal with guilt is through confession to God- David shows us in Psalm 32:1-6 Of David. A maskil. Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me: my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"--and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.
- Sometimes it helps confession our sin to a trusted believer-There is healing in confession James 5:15-16 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

Drawing near means becoming an inspiration to others in the church by practical love and good deeds-v24 'let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works'

- The best way to spur one another on to love and good deeds is by practising these ourselves. This verse is challenging us to be creative in the way in which we show love to one another.
- Over this next week what creative ways can you communicate your love to others within the body of Christ? What abilities has God-given to you that you can use in this? What places of opportunity can you volunteer to help in to show your love? Is there a gift you can give someone in the church that will bless them? Could you invite someone for a meal? Could you babysit for someone? Could you help them with a chore or fix something for them?
- 'Let us consider' means let us devote some time to think about ways in which we can fulfil loving one another. When was the last time you took time aside to think about how you can creatively show your family and Church family how much you love and appreciate them?

Drawing near means committing also to each other- v25 'Let us not give up meeting together and some are in the habit of doing '

- Here is an encouragement to keep on meeting together based upon our understanding of what Christ has done for us.
- If we truly understand the work of Christ on the cross we will understand just how much Christ loves the Church, and we will love the Church too. The fact that Jesus both loved us as individuals, and loved the Church enough to lay down His life will cause us to also lay down our lives for Him and His people.
- John tells us that we display our love for Christ by the amount that we love one another because Christ's primary command to us, alongside making disciples, is that we should love each other as He has loved us. John goes on to say that we should lay down our lives for our brethren.

1John 3:14-16 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

A family was involved in a serious traffic accident. Mike, the youngest of two brothers involved, was badly injured and needed a blood transfusion. Mike's big brother Danny, who was only eight years old, had the same blood type as his younger brother. The dad sat down with Danny and carefully explained to him why this blood transfusion was needed and how wonderful it would be for his little brother. After some silence, Danny responded by saying, "Yes, Daddy, I'll give my blood to Mike so he can get well." At the hospital, a pint of blood was drawn from Danny's veins. Only after the needle was removed did Danny turn to his father with tears rolling down his cheeks and ask, "Daddy, when do I die?" The father suddenly realized with a shock that Danny had misunderstood his explanation of giving blood. Danny thought he was giving all of his blood to save the life of his brother! He thought that he would die after the transfusion was over. Yet he still had agreed to help his little brother.

- Some were out of the habit of meeting together. Habits can be good or bad, they take time to form but once formed become part of us and become second nature. Our walk with God is reflected by our walk with His people. Are we happy with our habits here, or are there new habits we are wanting to develop which we know long term will make us more fruitful in Christ?
- NKJV -'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...but exhorting one another'- when we don't meet with other Christians we are forsaking one another because each one of us is a vital part of Christ's body- we are an orchestra, and without the triangle there is something missing! *Exhorting* means-To urge by strong, often stirring argument, admonition, advice, or appeal: exhorted the troops to hold the line (source thefreedictionary.com). We are called here to do this to one another- encourage each other to meet together- phone someone up, tell them you've missed them etc. We are to be a pastoral people.
- -v25- even more as we see the Day approaching- When Christ returns we will

certainly not regret having been committed to meeting together, however there will be regrets if we have not made it a priority in our lives. Our response to the imminent return of Christ should be to become more committed to Him and to His Church, including reaching out to the lost. Jesus warned us to be ready and not to be like the lazy servant who thought my master is taking his time coming back and rather than loving fellow servants turned upon them and started living carelessly over drinking etc. the writer of Hebrews encourages us to make wise choices with our lives in light of the gospel we have received.

Summary

- We are called to sincerely draw near to God

The implications of this will be that we:

- Deal correctly with guilt
- Become an inspiration to others by your love and good deeds
- Become committed to meeting together

Song

Before the Throne of God Above