

Main Idea: Hebrews 3:1-6 calls on us to consider Jesus, the One who is the giver of rest. In practical terms that means we must live with two thoughts in mind.

I. Think about who Jesus is (1-6a).

- A. He is the one that God sent to us (1a).
  - 1. God initiated a plan to save sinners.
  - 2. God authorized His Son to accomplish it.
- B. He is the one that represents us before God (1b).
  - 1. To be right with God involves verbal profession.
  - 2. To be right with God involves life support.
- C. He is the one who is faithful (2).
  - 1. We can learn from Moses.
  - 2. We must put our trust in Jesus.
- D. He is the one who is worthy (3).
- E. He is the Son who is over God’s house (4-6a).
  - 1. Moses was a faithful servant in God’s house.
  - 2. Jesus is the builder and master of God’s house.

II. Think about who we are (6b).

- A. God says we are His family (1).
- B. God says we are His residence (6b).
  - 1. The church is His, not ours.
  - 2. To ignore the church is to ignore Him.
- C. God says that we are to persevere (6b).
  - 1. True faith doesn’t fall away.
  - 2. True faith holds on to Jesus to the end.

Make It Personal: Ask yourself two important questions.

- 1. Is Jesus at the center of my life or merely an add-on?
- 2. What needs to happen so that my life brings honor to Jesus?

Redeemed people pray the Word. This is a key emphasis for us at WBC this year and we began the year with some messages on how to pray the Word. Now we shift gears and turn to what makes prayer possible.

It’s time to return to our Hebrews series! In our journey through this wonderful letter, we have come to the second section. We’re calling it, “*Rest in the Son: An Exposition of Hebrews 3-4*. We could call it, “*Behold the Son and Rest in Him*.” *Behold the Son* was Hebrews 1-2. *Rest in the Son* is the call of Hebrews 3-4.

When you read through Hebrews 3-4, this is the word that stands out. “Rest” is all over the place. We see it *twelve* times. This is where beholding the Son is meant to take us. Not to mere fascination with Him, nor even reverence for Him, but to *rest*. A true Christian *rests* in the Son.

What does it mean to *rest*? We’ll be thinking a lot about that question in the weeks ahead. But today as we begin the exposition of this section, we’ll notice that the preacher launches us into this section with an important command in verse 1. *Consider Jesus*. Let’s do just that, by reading our text, then pondering it carefully, and then by affirming our rest in Him by coming together to His Table.

*Scripture Reading: Hebrews 3:1-6*

You are in a church worship service this morning and I’m glad you are here, for many reasons. Chiefly, God deserves our praise and worship. Secondarily, we benefit when we worship our Maker.

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\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Hebrews series preached at WBC in 2007.

I want us to think about a sobering reality. There are two kinds of people in church right now, in this church and in just about any other church. To borrow from an illustration I've used before, think of a bicycle wheel. At the center there is a hub and coming out from the center there are spokes. For some people, Jesus is like a spoke. Oh, He's part of the wheel of life, along with family, job, recreation, church, money, retirement plans, and many other spokes. But Jesus is just a spoke in the wheel, an important spoke perhaps, but nonetheless, just a spoke, one that's been added to the collection of other spokes, all which revolve around the hub of life which is *self*.

To others, however, to those who have been gripped by God's transforming grace, Jesus isn't merely a spoke. He indeed is the *hub* of the wheel. Life revolves around Him, and all the spokes are connected to Him. Family, job, recreation, church, and the rest, they all point to Him because He is at the *center* of their lives.

Quite frankly, it's not easy to tell these two groups apart on Sunday. The person who adds Jesus to his life professes faith in Jesus, just like the one who puts Him at the center. He may have been baptized, and even joined the church, as if to say, "Jesus is a really important spoke in my life, and so is church." Yet the fact remains, He is just a spoke and not the hub.

According to a 2023-2024 survey by the Pew Research Center, 62% of American adults identify as Christians (21% of this group lives in the Midwest, 16% live in the Northeast, 42% live in the South and 21% live in the West). 86% of these "Christians" consider themselves to be either "very spiritual" or "somewhat spiritual". 33% of these professed "Christians" read Scripture at least once a week, while 46% say they seldom or never read the Scriptures. 51% of Christians say they attend religious services but a few times a year, seldom, or never. 24% of Christians say they don't believe in the existence of hell. 57% of Christians say that homosexuality should be accepted and 55% say they favor same-sex marriage. 52% say abortion should be legal in all/most cases.

Those numbers are revealing. Christ was a Bible-man and said that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Christ talked about hell more than anyone else in the Bible (see Luke 16:19ff). Christ taught that marriage is for a man and a woman (Matthew 19:4-6). Yet America is filled with people who identify themselves as Christ-followers who don't believe and practice what Christ Himself modeled and taught.

How can this be? It's because for many "Christians", Christ is a *spoke* and not the *hub*. They believe in Jesus. They even respect Jesus. But He's on the peripheral of life and not in the center. What's the solution for this confusion? The writer of Hebrews gives us the solution in today's text. In Hebrews 3:1 he calls on us to *consider Jesus*.

This is what's needed for millions in our country. Consider Jesus. This is what was needed for the readers of this letter in the first century who were wavering in their faith. Consider Jesus. This is what is needed for us lest we settle for making Him a spoke rather than the hub.

The NIV says, "*Fix your thoughts on Jesus.*" The verb (*katanoesate*) means "to give careful consideration to, to pay attention to, to immerse oneself in." In Matthew 7:3 Jesus asks, "*Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and *pay no attention to* the plank in your own eye?*" There's our word, *pay attention to*. It would be ludicrous to try to get a speck of dust out of your brother's eye and fail to pay attention to a log hanging out of your own eye. Likewise, it's ludicrous to claim to be a Christian and yet fail to pay attention to Jesus.

*Consider Jesus*, says the writer of Hebrews. A casual glance now and then won't cut it. A once a week Jesus-fix won't do it either. This is a call for a continual, concentrated contemplation of two subjects: first, who Jesus is (1-6), then secondly, who we are (6b).

### I. Think about who Jesus is (1-6a).

Verse 1 begins, "Therefore," which points us back. Hebrews 3 builds on Hebrews 1-2 which present the superiority of Jesus Christ. Christ is God's Son, the creator of the universe (1:2), the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God (1:3). He is greater than the angels (1:4), but He made Himself lower than the angels by entering the world as a human (2:9), in order to rescue sinful man by means of His death and subsequent resurrection. That means that Jesus Christ is not one religious option amongst many, but is in a class all by Himself.

This is the first time in the book that the writer addresses the readers directly.

"Therefore, *holy brothers*," he says in verse 1, "*you who share in a heavenly calling*." Note the writer calls them "holy brothers" which indicates he considered them to be believers. The term "brother" (*adelphos*) means "from the same womb" (a combination of *apo* and *delphus*). Spiritually, they came into existence from the womb of God by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (he refers to them as "brothers" again in 3:12; 10:19; and 13:22; and refers to Timothy specifically as "our brother" in 13:22).<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, he calls them "holy brothers" indicating they had been set apart by God. Sanctified ones, saints—that's what the word *hagioi* means. Hebrews 2:11 says that God is "the one who makes men holy" and that His people are "those who are made holy." Hebrews 10:14 explains that our holiness is both a reality *and* a process, "Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

In addition, he says these holy brothers "share in a heavenly calling," with the word "share" referring to people who are *partakers* or *partners* (the same word appears in Luke 5:7 speaking of some men who were *partners* in a fishing business, meaning they shared the fishing business together). Here the writer says his readers shared together, not a fishing business, but in a *heavenly calling*.

God, of course, is the subject behind this heavenly calling. In eternity past God initiated a plan to rescue helpless sinners and chose the very people whom He would liberate. "Those He predestined, he also called," says Romans 8:30, and "those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

If you are in God's family today, here's why. It's because of what God graciously did for you. He provided salvation for you through His Son's work on the cross, yes, but He did more than that. A sinner who is dead in sin needs more than the mere provision of salvation, just like a drowning man who has fainted in the water needs more than a life preserver tossed his way. You need not only the life-preserver but you need someone to wake you up so you'll see the life-preserver. And God did that for you. When you were dead in your sins He *called* you. Hebrews 9:15 explains, "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that *those who are called* may receive the promised eternal inheritance."

What's the appropriate response to the One who called you out of your dead state and birthed you into His family? Is it to go to church a couple of times a year? No. A couple of times a month? No. A couple of times a week? No, He deserves more than that.

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<sup>2</sup> Observation by Robert Gromacki, p. 54.

Here's the appropriate response. Verse 1 says, "Consider Jesus." And what will happen if we will consider Jesus? Our text tells us we will discover five reasons why we should gladly make Him the hub rather than the spoke in our lives.

**A. He is the one that God sent to us (1a).** He's called "the apostle," a word that means "one sent." It's the same word Jesus used to identify the twelve men He chose and then sent out to do His work. They were apostles, "sent ones." Now Hebrews 3:1 tells us that Jesus, too, was an apostle, indeed, *the apostle, the One that God sent to the world.*<sup>3</sup>

Jesus was sent, as we've already seen in Hebrews, because of God's plan.

1. *God initiated a plan to save sinners.* In eternity past God designed this plan, the plan of redemption. And then...

2. *God authorized His Son to accomplish it.* That's what Jesus acknowledged when He prayed in John 17:3, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, *whom you have sent.*"<sup>4</sup> And later He had this to say to the apostles in John 20:21, "As the Father *has sent me*, I am sending you."

What's true of the One we are to consider? He's the One that God sent from heaven to us. Just think. God sent Him. Are you glad God sent Him? How do we show God that we are glad He sent His Son? Glad recipients embrace Him as the hub not the spoke.

**B. He is the one that represents us before God (1b).** The writer calls Jesus "the high priest of our confession".<sup>5</sup> As an apostle, Jesus represented God before men. As a high priest, He represents men before God.<sup>6</sup> That's what a priest does. He's a go-between, a mediator, a person who represents unworthy sinners before their holy God.

Yet Jesus isn't merely a priest, but the *high* priest, and as we saw in the previous passage, "a merciful and faithful high priest (2:17)." And He isn't simply the high priest, but the high priest *whom we confess*. The word "confess" simply means "to say the same thing."

"All true Christians 'say the same thing,'" says Warren Wiersbe, "when it comes to their experience of salvation."<sup>7</sup> There's only one person who can take us to heaven, and there's only one confession that connects us to this person, as Romans 10:9 declares, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." That leads to two conclusions.

1. *To be right with God involves verbal profession.* The fact that there is a high priest does me little good until He becomes *my* high priest. I must confess with my mouth that He alone enables me to approach a holy God. That's what baptism is all about.

When a person is baptized, he is making a public confession, saying, "I don't come to God in my merit, but in Christ's." But is verbal profession all there is? No.

2. *To be right with God involves life support.* In other words, if Jesus is truly my high priest I will demonstrate that belief not only with my words but my life. There will be life support.

Yes, there's an apostle, the one that God sent to us. And there's a high priest, the one who alone can represent us before God. And who is He? In the Greek text the writer actually puts the name "Jesus" at the end of the verse, stating, "Fix your thoughts on the apostle and high priest *whom we confess, Jesus.*"

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<sup>3</sup> It's the only time in the Bible this word is used to depict Jesus.

<sup>4</sup> See also 1 John 4:10, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and *sent his Son* as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

<sup>5</sup> The NIV says "the high priest *whom we confess*."

<sup>6</sup> Observation by Wiersbe and others, p. 286.

<sup>7</sup> Wiersbe, p. 285.

By the way, by using His human name, “Jesus,” the author is emphasizing that the Son of God accomplished His tasks as apostle and high priest as a *man*. He had to become a man to do His life-saving work (see 2:14).

Do you see the connection, my friend? If we truly believe that Jesus is the only one who can reconcile a sinner with His Maker, then we won’t just *add Him* to our life, but will gladly make Him *central* as the hub around which all of life revolves.

Yet there’s more to be said about Jesus. There’s a third reason to consider.

**C. He is the one who is faithful (2).** The NIV says, “He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house.”<sup>8</sup>

Remember, Hebrews was written to a Jewish audience. In the eyes of the Jews, Moses was perhaps the greatest of men. Was Moses perfect? Far from it. He killed a man once, struck a rock another time when God told him to speak to it. But the author doesn’t criticize Moses by pointing out his flaws. Instead, he affirms this reality.

1. *We can learn from Moses.* Why? Because Moses was faithful. Exodus 40:16 says, “Moses did everything just as the LORD commanded him.” He led two million Hebrew slaves out of bondage in Egypt, across the barren desert, and took them to the brink of the Promised Land. Along the way he gave his people God’s Word. As a prophet he spoke for God, even when his message just about got him killed.

Indeed, Moses was a great man of God and we can learn from him. He did the work God gave Him to do. He was faithful.

Now answer this. How does Moses compare with Jesus? That’s not a moot question. Some first century church members were thinking about walking away from Jesus because of this question. They loved Moses. They loved the tidy religious system that their forefathers had created around Moses. And they were about to give up Jesus to walk back into the security of Moses’ arms.

Consider Jesus! says the author. Yes, Moses was faithful and we can learn from him. But how much more so was Jesus! Was He faithful? Perfectly so. He did exactly what His Father told Him to do, from becoming a man to dying in the place of rebel sinners. And this is why, though we can learn from Moses, we must put our total trust in Jesus.

2. *We must put our trust in Jesus.* We’re told something quite significant about Jesus in verse 2. We’re told He was faithful to him “who appointed him.” The Greek verb for “appointed” is commonly translated “make” or “create.” For instance, in the LXX of Genesis 1:1 we read, “In the beginning God *created*...” Not surprisingly, a group of people known as the Arians used this verse as a proof-text to say that Christ was “created” and not the eternal Son of God.

How shall we respond to the Arians, and others like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who deny Christ’s deity? By *considering*. By doing some careful *thinking*. So let’s think this through. Is this word translated “created” at times? Yes. But it’s also translated “appointed” at other times, as it is here in the ESV, NIV and KJV. Just like it is in Mark 3:14 which says Christ “appointed” the twelve (that verse isn’t saying that He created them but *appointed* them to be His apostles). Likewise, in Acts 2:36, where Peter says, “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has **made** this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” The word “made” clearly doesn’t mean that God *created* Jesus but rather *appointed* Him to be Lord and Christ.

To illustrate, I could say that in 1987 you *made* me your pastor. Does that mean you created me, that you brought me into existence at that moment? No. It means you *appointed* me to a task, a calling, a ministry.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> ESV “who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house.”

So in Hebrews 3:2. While the word itself *can* be translated “made” or “created,” our text isn’t saying that Jesus was *made* or *created* (for too many other texts insist that God’s Son has always existed, including Hebrews 1:2-3; John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-17). The context of Hebrews 3 makes it clear that the word here means that Jesus was *appointed* to be something, namely, appointed by God the Father to serve in the dual role of apostle and high priest. And Jesus did so *faithfully*.

And this leads us to a fourth reason He ought to be the hub of our lives.

**D. He is the one who is worthy (3).** In verse 3 the writer says (NIV), “For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.”

It’s often said that people are more important than things. That’s true. No matter how valuable a house may be, the person who owns the house possesses greater value.

As Christians we ought to have a great appreciation for our Jewish heritage. As Paul reminds us of the Jews in Romans 9:4-5, “Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!”

Friends, how we handle this tension between Moses and Jesus isn’t a secondary matter. It’s actually splitting churches. Some say, in essence, we don’t need Moses nor Israel any longer. They’re gone (e.g. replacement theology which essentially says that the church has replaced Israel in God’s plan). Still others want to resurrect Moses and take the church right back into the Old Testament era (e.g. Christian nationalism which essentially says that our country should be like Israel, indeed we are the new Israel in God’s plan; and America isn’t the only country to use this rationale; Germany used it in the past, and Great Britain, and Russia).

Indeed, we ought to have a high view of Moses. He’s worthy of honor. But Jesus is indeed worthy of greater honor. He alone possesses inherent worth for He’s not just a part of God’s house, like Moses was. He’s the *builder* of God’s house. “I will build my church,” Jesus said (Matt. 16:18).

Let’s talk about the issue behind the issue. *Considering* takes work. *Thinking* takes work and time and effort. We’re not going to resolve this tension between Moses and Jesus by listening to a fifteen minute podcast. On a personal note, I’ve been thinking about these matters for forty-plus years and still have much to learn. I encourage you to do the following.

- Make a careful study of Romans 9-11.
- Take a systematic theology class at TSBC that addresses the relationship between Israel and the church.
- Read *Bonhoeffer*, by Eric Metaxas, and see how believers deal with this in the 1930s.
- Read *Paul Schneider, the Martyr of Buchenwald*. Schneider loved his country and was awarded the iron cross in the first world war. But he gave ultimate allegiance to Christ, not country, and became the first Protestant pastor murdered by the Nazis.
- Read *How the Nations Rage: Rethinking Faith and Politics in a Divided Age*, by Jonathan Leeman.
- Read *Dispensational Hermeneutics*, by Michael Vlack.

The point is, *consider*. There’s so much to consider if we’re to think rightly about Jesus. Jesus is the builder, says Hebrews. But there’s more, so let’s keep thinking.

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<sup>9</sup> Philip Hughes offers a very helpful explanation on this on pages 129-30.

**E. He is the Son who is over God's house (4-6a).** Listen to verses 4-6a, "(For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.)<sup>5</sup> Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later,<sup>6</sup> but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son."

Once again, the writer is comparing Moses and Christ. How do they compare?

1. *Moses was a faithful servant in God's house.* The Bible repeatedly calls Moses "God's servant". For instance, Exodus 14:31 states, "The people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant." Deuteronomy 34:5 says, "And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said." Revelation 15:3 likewise refers to him as "...Moses the servant of God."

When the writer calls Moses a "servant" in verse 5, he doesn't use the more common Greek words *doulos* or *diakonos*, but rather the Greek *therapon*, which in the verbal form means "to heal." We get the English word "therapy" from it. Gromacki observes, "Moses' service was in a ministry of moral and spiritual healing, prescribing positive areas of nutrition and eliminating the destructive elements. He did what he could in the best interests of the national health of Israel."<sup>10</sup>

Yes, Moses was a faithful servant in God's house. But Jesus? His credentials far exceed those of Moses.

2. *Jesus is the builder and master of God's house.* Verse 6 begins, "But *Christ*." This is the first time the book of Hebrews has called Him "Christ" (the KJV follows a later manuscript and uses it in verse 1). Until now He's been identified as "the Son" (1:2, 3), "the Lord" (2:4), and "Jesus" (2:9, 11, & 3:1). Now finally, the writer of Hebrews calls Him "Christ" which comes from the Greek *Christos* which relates to the Hebrew word *Meshiach* ("Messiah"). Jesus is His name. Christ is His title.

Ponder this. God's Son who entered the world as baby Jesus is the Messiah Himself. To put it plainly, Moses was a servant *in* God's house, but Christ, God's Son, is the builder who is *over* God's house.<sup>11</sup>

Here we see another powerful argument for the deity of Christ. Wiersbe explains, "If God built all things [as verse 4 says], and Jesus Christ built God's house, then Jesus Christ must be God."

So, Jesus is the one God sent to us. He's the one who represents us before God. He is the one who is faithful. And worthy. He is the Son who is over God's house. And why is the writer telling us all this? Remember his exhortation back in verse 1. He wants us to *consider Jesus*.

He's after our minds, friends, our thinking, our attention. In Acts 27:39, after nearly dying in a storm at sea, Paul and his companions were "looking intently" for a safe place to land. That's our verb, and that's what we must do. We must *look intently* to the only safe place where we can anchor the ship of our lives. We must *fix our thoughts on Jesus*.

We cannot be God's kind of person without getting serious about the proper use of our *minds*. Hebrews says that we must be intentional about fixing our thoughts on Jesus. But how do we do that?

My college advisor, Robert Gromacki, wrote a commentary on Hebrews. He offers this helpful counsel, "It involves reflective study, attentive examination, and careful thought. The immaturity and insecurity of the readers were caused by an unhealthy

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<sup>10</sup> R. Gromacki, p. 59.

<sup>11</sup> Wiersbe, p. 286.

preoccupation of self and problems. The moral remedy was an active meditation on the merit of Christ in His person and redemptive work.”<sup>12</sup>

Ponder carefully Dr. Gromacki’s wise assessment. If we’re serious about Jesus-centered living, we must devote ourselves to *reflective study, attentive examination, and careful thought*. We must resist a feeling-oriented approach to life and take steps to engage our minds, to use our gray-matter in a very specific way. To engage in *active meditation* (not passive thinking, like what you do when you watch television and mindlessly take in whatever happens to come at you from the screen). No, we must engage in *active meditation on the merit of Christ in His person and redemptive work*.

Simply put, we need to think about who Jesus is, what He is like, and what He did for us (particularly what He did for us on the cross). We need to do it over and over and over again.

To put it plainly, coming to church on Sunday morning is great, but it isn’t enough. If I am to fix my thoughts on Jesus, it’s going to take more than a couple of hours on Sunday morning. You can *add Jesus* to your life by doing that, but you can’t make Him your hub that way.

“What’s necessary?” you ask. I’m glad you asked! For starters, you and I need to carve out time on a *daily basis* to spend time with Jesus. I need to read His Word and meditate on it so that I carry it (and Him) with me throughout the day.

And then, I need to get serious about this *house* that the writer says Jesus is building, this house called *the church*. Once again, I’m not living a Jesus-focused life if I’m merely *adding* His house to my life. I need to make His house *central*. I need to take advantage of the whole life of the church, not just one service now and then.

To change the analogy, it’s important to be a “clean-plater.” That’s what my mother always told me. “Brad, if you want to grow up and be strong and healthy, then don’t waste what I put on your plate. Be a clean-plater.”

Did you realize that as a church we work hard, as our mothers did in the physical sense, to provide a balanced spiritual diet? The corporate services of this church are not intended to be a pick-and-choose smorgasbord. We’re seeking to provide you with a well-balanced diet, and all the services work together to provide that diet.

On Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. we offer a *worship* service. That’s what you’re experiencing right now. It’s the *meat* of the church life. And we need the meat of God’s Word! But what happens if our diet consists only of *meat*? We won’t be spiritually healthy, not because meat is bad but because God created us to need more than meat.

That’s why on Sunday mornings at 9:30 we offer another critical part of a balanced diet, small group Bible study classes for all ages, from the cradle up. Our Sunday School classes are designed to be learning centers and caring centers. Our Sunday afternoon community groups take it a step further with intentional fellowship designed to help us know the Word and each other better.

So if the morning worship service is the *meat* on your plate, then Sunday School and community groups provide the *vegetables*. When we study God’s Word together, and discuss it with others who know and love Him, and pray over it, and encourage each other to apply it, we’re gaining additional vitamins that are vital to spiritual health.

But there’s more. On the second Sunday evenings of the month, we have what we call our *church family service*. On Sunday mornings we *look up*, for that’s what worship is, a vertical focus. But on Sunday evenings we *look around us* at the church family. We take time to learn what the Lord is doing in the ministries and lives of people in the

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<sup>12</sup> R. Gromacki, p. 56.

church family. We allow preachers in training to proclaim God's Word to us. We'll be having intentional prayer services in March, April, and May. You might say you get your gravy on Sunday evenings.

But any doctor will tell you all intake isn't good. Exercise is key, and that's what Wednesday evening is all about. It's a ministry night where we have opportunity to serve others, by teaching children in FLY, by praying for our missionaries and each other in our adult Bible study and prayer meeting.

Here's my invitation, brothers and sisters. Be a clean-plater this year. It will help you consider Jesus if you make His house, not just another *spoke* in your life, but the *hub* of it.

You say, "But if I do that, it sounds like I'll have *two* hubs in my wheel, Christ *and* the church." No, not two hubs. Just one. As long as you keep in mind what the church is. It's Christ's visible Body, which means that focusing on the church is by God's design one of the prime ways we can fix our eyes on Christ.

There's more. There's a second subject the writer of Hebrews says we must contemplate. First, think about who Jesus is (1-6a). Second, think about who we are.

## II. Think about who we are (6b).

Who are we? God Himself gives three staggering answers to that question.

**A. God says we are His family (1).** As we saw earlier in verse 1, we are called "holy brothers". If you asked me, "How many brothers do you have?" and I answered, "I have one brother. His name is Matt and he lives in Colorado," I would be telling the truth, but not the whole truth. This passage indicates that I have many brothers, and so do you if you're in Christ. We are members of a holy, divine brotherhood, a forever family.

**B. God says we are His residence (6b).** Let the first words of verse 6 sink in. "And we are his house." Whose house? God's house. God's *house* isn't a building. It's people, a household of people, the very people whom God has chosen and birthed into His family. In the Old Testament the Israelites were the people of God. Now in the present age we the church are God's people.

Does God need a house? No. He doesn't need anything. But He has chosen to dwell in a house, and we are His residence. This is a theme the New Testament writers celebrate over and over.

Listen to in **1 Corinthians 3:16**, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" And **Ephesians 2:21-22**, "In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." And **1 Peter 2:5**, "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

You may be thinking, "I love the Lord but I struggle with the church. To be honest, I think the church is kind of messy and clunky. Tell me again why I need the church."

Okay, start with this thought. Because it is His. Beloved, let these words from verse 6 sink in. *We are His house.* Amazing, yet true.

1. *This means the church is His, not ours.* It's *His* house. This means if I have a problem with the church, I have a problem with Him. He's not oblivious to the problems of the church, yet He loves it warts and all.

2. *This also means to ignore the church is to ignore Him.* It reminds me of the workaholic dad who insists, "I love my family," but he's hardly ever home. He's sending a conflicting message, isn't he? And so is the person who says he loves Christ but stays away from Christ's house.

At this point, the writer puts before us a sobering warning. Notice how verse 6 ends, “And we are his house, *if* indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.” The NIV says, “And we are his house, *if* we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.”<sup>13</sup>

Don’s miss how the writer includes himself in this warning. He doesn’t say, “If *you* hold on,” but “If *we* hold on.” This is a serious caution for all who profess Christ. The God who says we are His family and His residence calls for a specific response.

**C. God says that we are to persevere (6b).** We are His house *if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope*. This is a serious warning and it will continue throughout the book of Hebrews (see 3:14; 6:11; etc). How do you know if you are a part of God’s house? The writer says, “You know it if you hold fast, if you persevere in your confidence in Christ.” We hear the same in 3:14, “For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.”

Does the “if” mean that a child of God can lose his or her salvation? At this point we could look at passage after passage that teach that salvation is the work of God, and that by His grace He saves sinners and keeps them secure (such as John 10:27-29; 1 John 5:11-13). But here’s the reality that the writer of Hebrews is facing, and we must face.

Not all who *profess* Christ truly *possess* Christ. When Jesus told the parable of the four soils, He warned about people who like seed sown in rocky ground look good at first, but then wither in the sun because they lack a proper root system. A positive initial response doesn’t guarantee there will be fruit, and if the fruit of Christ’s life isn’t seen, this lack of fruit indicates that the person was never truly connected to Christ the vine in the first place.

Let’s not water down the warning in Hebrews. We need it. It says something to us about the nature of true, saving faith.

1. *True faith doesn’t fall away.*<sup>14</sup>

2. *True faith holds on to Jesus to the end.* This is what Jesus Himself said. He said it in Matthew 10:22, “All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.” And in John 8:31, “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.’” According to Jesus, it’s possible to “believe” in Him and not necessarily be one of His disciples. True faith holds on, by the enabling grace of God, to the end.<sup>15</sup>

When faith is genuine, Jesus is the hub, not the spoke. So consider Jesus, my friend! Consider who He is, and who we are. This is where resting in Him begins.

### Make It Personal: Ask yourself two important questions...

1. *Is Jesus at the center of my life or merely an add-on?*

2. *What needs to happen so that my life brings honor to Jesus?*

**Closing Song:** #178 “*O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*” (all three verses)

**Communion:** Matthew 26:26-29

**This evening:** Preachers in Training in 2 Peter

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<sup>13</sup> At the end of verse 6 some manuscripts add “firm to the end.”

<sup>14</sup> Philip Hughes explains, “His readers...are in danger of wavering under the influence of strange ideas and hostile pressures. Like Christians in every age, they are face to face with perplexities and temptations. They are exhorted accordingly not to weaken and retire from the struggle, and reminded that only if they *hold fast* are they God’s ‘house.’” Philip Hughes, p. 139.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Hughes: “Security in Christ does not absolve one from personal responsibility: quite the contrary, for the regenerate man is under total obligation to God. Seriousness in believing should manifest itself in seriousness concerning doctrine and conduct.” p. 139.