

Main Idea: God not only offers us His rest, but He graciously has provided two resources for entering His rest. We learn about these resources in Hebrews 4:12-16. In this message we’ll be zeroing in on the second resource.

I. We have His Word (12-13).

II. We have a High Priest (14-16).

A. We can trust Him because of who He is (14).

1. He is great.
2. He went through the heavens.
  - a. He went where sinners cannot go.
  - b. He went where God is.
3. He is both God and man.
4. He deserves our absolute allegiance.
  - a. To be saved we must make a public profession.
  - b. If we are saved, we will hold on to that profession.
  - c. We will hold it because He is holding us.

B. We can trust Him because of what He experienced (15).

1. He identified with our weakness.
2. He was tempted just like we are.
3. He never sinned.
4. He understands what we feel.

C. We can trust Him because of what He offers (16).

1. He gives us access to the throne.
2. He gives us confidence.
3. He gives us mercy and grace.
4. He gives us what we need at the right time.

The Bottom Line: Because there is a High Priest...

1. We can experience God’s rest today.
2. We can anticipate God’s rest forever and ever.

Now that we’ve brought our praises to our worthy God through song, let’s refuel those praises by opening His Word together. *Rest in the Son* is our current series. Let’s read and ponder together today’s text.

*Scripture Reading: Hebrews 4:12-16*

In November 2007 Billy Graham wrote a letter thanking friends for their prayer support following the loss of his wife, Ruth, who went to be with the Lord on June 14 of 2007. In his own words, “Ruth was the greatest Christian I have known, and her deep faith was a constant anchor for me. After 64 years of marriage, my heart is full of gratitude to God for His comfort and grace in helping me through these days.”

Then he shared this anecdote, “Years ago, Ruth noticed a highway sign and told us she wanted that sign as her epitaph. If you visit her burial place today in Charlotte, you will find the words of the sign etched on her marker stone, ‘End of construction. Thank you for your patience.’”<sup>2</sup>

That’s good. The Christian life is like a construction project. There’s work involved, a task to be accomplished. This work involves a process called *progressive sanctification* in which we as believers must consistently “put off” old patterns of desires, thoughts, and behavior, and “put on” new patterns of desires, thoughts, and behavior (to use Ephesians 4:22-24 terminology). God’s agenda is to use all things in our lives to accomplish His purpose of transforming us into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ (to use the language of Romans 8:28-29).

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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 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Billy Graham, November 2007.

But sometimes the construction site gets messy. When I was in seminary, I remember while working on a framing crew, coming to our construction site one morning and noticing that the roof trusses we had set in place the previous day had *blown over* and looked like a stack of fallen dominoes. When you see a sight like that, you just want to go home. Sometimes you feel that way in the Christian life, too.

How do you help a brother or sister in Christ who is struggling, perhaps to the point that they want to turn around and go home? There are several directions you could go in answering the answer. After all, God has given us *twenty-one* New Testament epistles, and each contain practical counsel for dealing with challenges in the Christian life. Yet in each of those letters we find a common starting place. Christians who struggle need many things, but none more basic than this.

They need the reminder that if we have Christ, we *have what it takes* to make it to the end of the construction project. God has not left His people deficient in any way.

In the first century there were a group of people, Jewish by background, who had professed faith in Christ. Yet when persecution heated up, they began to contemplate going back and renegeing on their promise to Christ. So the Spirit of God graciously gave them a letter (we call it Hebrews) to encourage these strugglers to persevere.

In the first three chapters the author reminds his readers that Christ is superior. He's the Son of God, the Creator and sustainer of the universe, and as such is superior to the angels (chs. 1-2). He's also superior to Moses (ch. 3). The point is, if you have the *best* why would you go back to something less?

I can think of a reason that I hear from time to time. "I'm just not the Christian type. I don't seem to have what it takes. This Christian life thing may work for others, but not for me." But of course, there is no such thing as "the Christian type," unless by that you mean *helpless sinners*, because those are the kind of people that God has chosen and intends to transform into His Son's likeness.

And it's to helpless sinners like us that God Himself offers the exact resources that we need to enter the fullest experience of His rest. This is the subject the writer of Hebrews addresses at the end of chapter four. We who struggle need to identify and use the *resources* God has provided for us.

Notice the charge in verse 11, "Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience." Again, says the struggler, I'm not sure I can do that. I want to enter God's rest, but I don't feel like I have what it takes. Oh yes you do, if you're in Christ.

According to Hebrews 4:12-16, God has provided you with two resources for entering His rest. Last time we explored the first resource, and in this message, after a brief review, we'll be zeroing in on the second resource.

### I. We have His Word (12-13).

Verse 12 says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

God has given us His Word. He spoke to men like Moses and David and Isaiah who wrote down His speech in what we call the Old Testament. He then spoke through His Son, says Hebrews 1:2-3, who is the radiance of the glory of God, and His Son's followers recorded the work and message of His Son in what we call the New Testament (Hebrews 2:1-4). Now the invisible God speaks to us through this Book. This is His Word and it is an amazing resource, as verse 12 indicates. It's alive, powerful, precise, and penetrating. It exposes the truth about our hearts (as we saw last time, it gives us categories for making sense of the struggle and deals with both *fruit sins* and *root sins*).

What's more, God's Word prepares us for the coming day of judgment, as verse 13 declares, "And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." If we want to enter God's rest we can, but we must utilize the wonderful resource He has provided for us in His Word. We must be Bible-people. If you want to do well in the struggle, my friend, I encourage you to be in the Word daily and under the Word whenever His people gather.

Yet there's a second resource that we learn about in verses 14-16.

## II. We have a High Priest (14-16).

As I mentioned a moment ago, the first readers of this epistle were Jewish Christians who were contemplating going back to their former beliefs and practices in Judaism. One criticism they heard from their Jewish brethren, no doubt, was, "You've abandoned what God Himself gave to us His chosen people fourteen centuries ago. You've stopped bringing the Levitical sacrifices. And you no longer have a high priest to represent you before God! Don't be a fool! Come back!"<sup>3</sup>

The point about the Levitical sacrifices the writer will address later. The point about the high priest he addresses now. But we *do* have a high priest, says the writer of Hebrews. And right here, in verses 14-16, he gives us three reasons why we can put our total trust in our High Priest.<sup>4</sup>

**A. We can trust Him because of who He is (14).** Ponder again verse 14, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."<sup>5</sup>

Most of us struggle to appreciate this fully because we don't understand what a priest is. A priest is a God-authorized individual who has access into God's presence, who then enters God's presence, and who then does something in behalf of others who could not otherwise enter God's presence. Simply put, a priest is a go-between, someone who represents sinners before a holy God.

Under the Mosaic law people brought their sacrifices to a priest, and then that priest offered those sacrifices in their behalf to God. So, if for fourteen centuries your people had been approaching God *through a priest*, you would have great difficulty abandoning that understanding. And for good reason. If you had learned that God is holy, as the Jews had rightly learned, and that sinners cannot enter into His holy presence in their sin-tainted condition, you would find it very difficult to resist the criticism of your Jewish family and friends.

*Unless.* Unless you knew for certain that you did have a priest. We *do*, says the writer, and here are four of His credentials.

1. *He is great.* The writer uses the Greek word *mega*. We have a *mega*-priest.

2. *He went through the heavens.* Notice the text doesn't say He merely went "to heaven," but that our mega-priest has "passed through the heavens." This raises two questions. One, why is the word 'heavens' plural? And two, what does it mean to pass "*through* the heavens?" Let's tackle these questions one at a time.

First of all, it's not uncommon in the Old Testament for the word 'heaven' to be plural.<sup>6</sup> "In the beginning God created the *heavens* and the earth (Genesis 1:1)." So, that could be why it's plural here. But it's likely that the writer has a more specific intent.

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, see Acts 21:28.

<sup>4</sup> The priesthood of Christ will be a key theme throughout the rest of the book of Hebrews.

<sup>5</sup> NIV 1984 "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>6</sup> Donald Guthrie, p. 120.

The term “heaven” is used in more than one way in the Bible. In fact, the Bible mentions three heavens. There’s the atmospheric heaven that surrounds the earth (Deut. 11:11), sometimes referred to as the first heaven. Then there is the realm of the sun, moon, and stars (Gen. 1:14), the second heaven. And then there’s the third heaven, referred to as ‘paradise,’ the realm where God dwells (Isa. 63:15; 2 Cor 12:2-4).

Hebrews 4:14 says that our high priest has gone through *the heavens*. Picture a scene with me. Jesus is standing on the mount of Olives (Acts 1:12). It was forty days ago that He died for sinners on the cross and walked out of His tomb alive. Now the Risen Jesus is talking with His followers and says, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses.”

And then this happened. Acts 1:9–11 says, “And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.<sup>10</sup> And while they were **gazing into heaven** [the atmospheric heaven] as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,<sup>11</sup> and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand **looking into heaven**? This Jesus, who was taken up from you **into heaven**, will come in the same way as you saw him go **into heaven**.”

My friend, Jesus isn’t on the other side of that cloud. He went through the heavens and is now in the realm where God lives. He ascended into the very presence of God.

And what about that word “through”? Why does it say our high priest passed *through* the heavens? Perhaps the writer is thinking about the layout of the tabernacle [see model] and temple where there three areas (sort of comparable to the three heavens). There was the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. No one could enter the Holy of Holies except the Jewish high priest, and he could enter it only once a year on the Day of Atonement. And on that day the high priest would go in to the Holy of Holies, sprinkle blood on the mercy seat, and then come back out.

See the pattern? In and out, in and out, year after year, over and over, in and out, in and out. The high priest couldn’t stay in the holy of holies because he too was sinner. And the high priest kept coming back year after year because God’s people were sinners.<sup>7</sup>

But we have a high priest who is far superior, who can do far more for us than any other priest can do. And here’s why, two reasons.

**First, He went where sinners cannot go.** Right through the heavens.

**Second, He went where God is.** And He stayed there too! Ephesians 4:10 says, “He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.”

Do you remember Nadab and Abihu? These two sons of Aaron were ordained as priests in Leviticus 8. They began their ministry in Leviticus 9. Then at the beginning of Leviticus 10 they took their censers and put *unauthorized* fire in them to burn incense. Consequently, fire came out from the LORD’s presence in the tabernacle and consumed them. Israel learned a powerful lesson that day. We do not approach the Living God on *our* terms, but on *His* terms.

Now a third credential. Our high priest is great and went through the heavens.

3. *He is both God and man.* In the book of Hebrews our high priest is called “Jesus” about a dozen times and “Christ” about a dozen times. The writer wants us to know that our Savior is both God and man. Verse 14 identifies Him as “Jesus, the Son of God.” He calls him “Jesus” (His humanity) and “the Son of God” (His deity).

4. *He deserves our absolute allegiance.* The writer uses an since/then construction in verse 14. The NIV, “*Since* we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, [*then*] let us hold firmly to the faith we

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<sup>7</sup> Observation by Robert Gromacki, p. 82.

profess.” *Since* we have a great high priest, *then* we ought to “hold firmly” [the verb *kratomen* means ‘to grab, to seize, to keep; it’s used also in 10:23, ‘Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess’]. Hold firmly to what? “Our confession,” says the ESV. “To the faith we profess” (NIV).<sup>8</sup> Absolute allegiance, that’s the only fitting response to the One who is the Mega-priest.

You say, “I’m not sure why you’re using the words *absolute allegiance*. Why not just say, He deserves our *faith*? Can you explain?”

That’s a good question. He does deserve our faith/trust, but our English word “faith” has been gutted of its biblical significance. Let me approach the question in a different way. When we look at verse 14 carefully, we learn three vital truths about salvation.

**One, to be saved we must make a public profession.** “Let us hold fast our *confession*.” Notice the verbal element. To become a Christian, you must do something with your mouth. Romans 10:9 says, “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.” Hebrews 3:1 refers to Jesus as “the high priest whom we confess.” Hebrews 4:14 says we are to hold on to “the profession” (NIV, *homologias* means ‘to say the same thing’; translated ‘confess’ in 1 John 1:9).

In order to become a Christian, we must say the same thing about Jesus that countless others have said and that God Himself says, that He is the Savior and Lord, that He died in our place, conquered the grave on the third day, returned to heaven, and now offers forgiveness and eternal life to all who will trust fully in Him.

And if we really believe in Him, we won’t hide it but rather make our faith known by making a public confession. That profession begins at baptism. Baptism is God’s intended means for making a public profession of one’s belief in and submission to the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Our public profession which *begins* at baptism certainly doesn’t end there. This brings us to a second vital truth about salvation.

**Two, if we are saved, we will hold on to that profession.** “Let us *hold fast our confession*,” says the writer. Hebrews was written to people (like most of us) who had already professed faith in Jesus. Now they are urged to hold to that profession, and those who truly know Christ *will do just that*. As Jesus said in John 10:27, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, *and they follow me*.”

What shall we conclude about the person who *doesn’t* hold fast to their confession? Hebrews will have much to say about this, particularly in chapter six. Does such a person lose his salvation? Some say yes. But if salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9), if it’s a work that God accomplishes by His grace (Eph. 2:8), and if it’s a work that the Lord Himself promises to maintain (as Jesus affirms when He says in John 10:28-29, “I give them eternal life and they will *never perish*”), how can it be lost? It’s not eternal life if it merely lasts until I fall away. A truly saved person cannot lose his or her salvation.

But not all who *profess* Christ truly *possess* Christ. This is the writer’s point. Truly saved people make a profession and hold on to it as well.

Let’s make it personal. If I’m truly a saved person, Jesus won’t merely be a fire insurance policy in my hip pocket. What I proclaimed publicly at my baptism will continue to be my profession throughout my life. I believe in Jesus! He is my Savior and the Master of my life. He is my hope in death and my treasure in life. That is my profession.

You say, “But how can I hold on to that profession? I’m so weak!”

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<sup>8</sup> The Greek simply says, “Hold fast the profession.”

**Three, we will hold it because He is holding us.** I love the word picture Jesus uses in John 10:28-29. Here's what He says about His sheep, "I give them eternal life [note that eternal life is His gift to us], and they shall never perish [note His promise of eternal security]; no one can snatch them out of my hand [note there is no possibility that He will lose one of His sheep, not one]. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand [note the double protection for God's people; both the Father and the Son are holding them in their hands]."

I'll say it again. You become a Christian simply by believing in Christ. But if you have truly believed in Christ, you will want to make that faith public through baptism and then throughout your life. You will give evidence that you are a Christ's by holding to your profession, and you will hold it because He is holding you.

This is the first reason we trust our high priest, because of who He is. There's more.

**B. We can trust Him because of what He experienced (15).** Verse 15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."<sup>9</sup>

Here we're told something rather shocking about our high priest. Yes, He is *great* and He has *gone through the heavens*, but He's not distant and far removed. To the contrary, the greatest being in the universe has actually experienced what we experience. The writer identifies four experiences of our wonderful priest in verse 15.

1. *He identified with our weakness.* "For we do *not* have a high priest who is *unable* to sympathize with our weakness." That's putting it negatively. It's telling us what we do *not* have. We do *not* have a distant, unsympathetic high priest. What *do* we have? We have a high priest who has the ability to *sympathize*. The word "sympathize" is the Greek *synpatheo* and literally means "to suffer along with."

To Greek thinking people in the first century, this was unthinkable. The Stoics, for instance, said that the primary attribute of God was *apatheia*, which meant he had the inability to feel anything at all. Barclay explains, "They argued that if a person could feel sorrow or joy it means that some other person was able to influence him. If so, that other person must, at least for that moment, be greater than he. No one, therefore, must be able in any sense to affect God for that would be to make him greater than God; and so God had to be completely beyond all feeling."<sup>10</sup>

Answer this. What does our high priest have the ability to sympathize with? Our *weaknesses*. Do you have any weaknesses? Do you ever feel weary and vulnerable? Then this is for you! We have a high priest who identified with our weakness.

How did He do it? It's called the *incarnation*<sup>11</sup>. God took upon Himself human flesh. He felt hunger. He got tired. He made Himself vulnerable to punches that hit His face and hammer blows that pierced His hands and feet. And He felt real pain. Oh, yes, He is able to sympathize with us. Hebrews 5:2 takes it a step further, stating, "He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness."

2. *He was tempted just like we are.* "Who in every respect has been tempted as we are." Amazing. Does this mean that Jesus experienced every single temptation possible?

Think of the woman who loses her mate. Months pass, and she grows weary. This lonely widow feels the intense temptation to grow bitter at God for taking her mate. Did

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<sup>9</sup> NIV "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>10</sup> Barclay, p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> Incarnation means "in" plus "carne", "in flesh".

Jesus experience that particular temptation? He was never married, nor did He ever lose a spouse, did He?

Think about the teenager who struggles with internet pornography. Did Jesus face that specific temptation? There was no internet in the first century.

What is this verse saying? The Greek text states that He was tempted “according to all” (*kata panta*) and “in like manner” (*kath homoiotes*). Think of it this way. According to 1 John 2:16, there are three basic categories of temptation [KJV]: “For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” Here are the three categories: **the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.** Those categories transcend cultures and time periods.

There’s *the lust of the flesh*. That covers everything from premarital sex to the lure of internet porn, to the temptation to overeat. Then there’s *the lust of the eyes*. That covers coveting your neighbor’s house or car or job because you’re not satisfied with what God has given you. Then there’s *the pride of life*. That includes the lure to look good in the eyes of people, wanting your name to be recognized, wanting your own way, etc.

And Jesus experienced each of these. Remember His wilderness temptation? Matthew 4 says that after fasting forty days, Jesus was approached by the devil who threw three temptations at Him, The first? *Turn these stones into bread* (the lust of the flesh). The second? *Throw yourself down off of the temple peak* and see if God’s angels rescue you (the lust of the eyes, living for the here and now). And the third? *Bow down and worship me and I’ll give you the kingdoms of the world* (the pride of life).

Oh beloved, the next time you face temptation and are wondering how you can resist it, remember this. Your high priest was tempted in the very same way. And how did He respond?

3. *He never sinned.* “As we are, yet without sin.” This is mind-stretching to ponder. He was *like us* yet *not like us*. As the *NLT* puts it, “He faced all of the same temptations we do, yet he did not sin.”

Think of what happens in the typical recovery group. “Man, the temptations were powerful last week, and I blew it,” says the first person. “I know what you mean brother,” says the second. “I’ve blown it too.” “So have I,” says the third. And the fourth. And everyone else around the circle of chairs agrees.

Except for one. “I didn’t give in,” He says. “I faced the fury of the same temptations you faced, but I never once gave in.” Who said that?! There’s only one.

Friends, when we’re struggling, it’s helpful to meet a fellow struggler, but this is far better. We have a sinless high priest. He had to be sinless in order to accomplish what He accomplished. Hebrews 7:26 declares, “Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.” According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us...”

You might be thinking, “But Jesus Christ is the Almighty powerful God. And that means that He didn’t feel the full weight of temptation like we do.”

Is that true? Since Christ is God and since He was ‘free from the bias of sin’ (as Guthrie puts it<sup>12</sup>), can He really identify with us? Was His temptation *real*?

We wrestled with that same question back in chapter two, and I shared the following illustration. I asked you to think of two men trying to lift a heavy object. Who better understands how heavy the object is, the man who tries to lift but can’t budge the object, or the man who heaves it over his head, holds it there for the count, and then returns it to the ground? If a man can’t lift two hundred pounds, he’ll never appreciate fully the weight of *four hundred pounds* hoisted over his head, will he?

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<sup>12</sup> Guthrie, p. 123.

When a person says, “Well, the fact that Jesus never sinned means He doesn’t understand how bad temptation can become,” it’s simply not true. It’s the other way around. *We* are the ones who don’t know how bad temptation can become, because we give in before it reaches its greatest intensity. He did not.

Barclay offers this explanation: “The fact that Jesus was without sin means that he knew depths and tensions and assaults of temptation which we never can know. So far from his battle being easier it was immeasurably harder. Why? For this reason—we fall to temptation long before the tempter has put out the whole of his power. We never know temptation at its fiercest because we fall long before that stage is reached. But Jesus was tempted far beyond we are; for in his case the tempter put everything he possessed into the assault. Think of this in terms of pain. There is a degree of pain which the human frame can stand—and when that degree is passed a person loses consciousness so that there are agonies of pain he can not know. It is so with temptation. We collapse in face of temptation; but Jesus went to our limit of temptation and far beyond it and still did not collapse. It is true to say that he was tempted in all things as we are; but it is also true to say that no one was tempted as he.”<sup>13</sup>

And these three experiences brings us to one vital conclusion about our high priest.

4. *He understands what we feel.* This is so comforting to know. He who knows all things by virtue of His *omniscience*, also knows what we feel by *experience*. Our high priest has experienced the powerful lure of temptation.

Think about what He faced during His life. At the age of twelve He was misunderstood by His earthly parents. As a perfect child He must have felt tempted to say, “I don’t need you to raise me.” But He didn’t. He submitted Himself to those parents in obedience to the fifth commandment.

As an adult He knew intense hunger, and was tempted to satisfy that legitimate need in ways His Father didn’t authorize. He spent sleepless nights and when bone-tired felt the lure to substitute His Father’s plan for some “time for me.” On multiple occasions He the perfect-one was gossiped against and wrongfully slandered by self-seeking critics, and felt the lure to make those critics pay.

Then came Gethsemane where He experienced intense emotional agony, and felt the temptation to abandon the plan of God for His life. At His court trial He experienced blatant injustice and the violation of His rights, and felt the temptation to retaliate. He was hit on the head by soldiers and felt the temptation to hit back. On the cross He experienced the pain of being forsaken and utterly alone, and felt the temptation to take matters in His own hand and call upon thousands of angels to come to His aid.

I was there when my wife gave birth to our two daughters. I watched the miracle happen twice and both times felt a great sense of appreciation for what my wife endured. I remember seeing the monitor in Blodgett Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan as it was indicating when the next contraction would hit Sherry, and I remember her saying to me, “Do something!” Yes, I was right there. I saw my wife carry and bring into the world our two children.

But I never experienced what I saw. I never felt what she felt. As hard as I might try, I could never say I know what she went through.

But our high priest can say it, because He does! Beloved, “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering,” says Isaiah 53:3-6. “Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was

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<sup>13</sup> William Barclay, p. 42.

crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Think again of the first readers of Hebrews. Some were considering abandoning their profession in Christ and choosing an easier path. Did Christ ever face that temptation? Hear the mockers at His cross, “If you are the Son of God come down from your cross (Matt 27:40ff)!” He had a choice to make. Leave the cross and in so doing leave His suffering, *or* remain on the cross and in so doing remain faithful to His Father’s will.

His whole life was full of such decisions. And His resolve again and again was, “I must do the will of Him who sent me.”

What temptations are you experiencing, my friend? He understands. But that’s not enough, is it? We need more. And He provides it as well. This brings us to a third reason we can trust Him, Not only because of who He is and what He experienced, but...

**C. We can trust Him because of what He offers (16).** Notice verse 16, “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”<sup>14</sup> He offers us four privileges.

1. *He gives us access to the throne.* He who has gone through the heavens and right into the presence of God offers to us access to that highest place. *To the throne*, says the text. A throne is where a king sits. A throne in heaven represents where the highest king of the universe sits. *Let us approach that throne*, is the invitation.

Have you ever been in a store, arrived at the checkout, proceeded to pay, only to discover you didn’t have any money on you? How’d you feel? Like crawling under the carpet and slithering out of the store?

That’s exactly how we *could* feel when we approach God with a request. There we are before the Owner of the universe and we have absolutely *nothing* we can give Him, for two reasons. One, He already owns everything, and two, as sinners we are bankrupt before Him. On what basis then can we approach Him? On the basis that He calls His throne *the throne of grace*.

Grace is God’s unmerited favor and help. That’s what this throne is, my friend. It’s the place where people who have nothing to offer God find help from God. And the reason He offers us help is because of the high priest who is there representing us.

2. *He gives us confidence.* Let us approach the throne *with confidence*, says our text. Do you realize how revolutionary this reality is? For fourteen centuries only one person per year could enter God’s Holy of Holies, just one. But when Christ died, something happened, something so significant that God actually tore in two from top to bottom the curtain-barrier that barred entrance into the Holy of Holies. Now all who trust in Christ can approach God and do so boldly!

Next week, thanks to the efforts of our woodworking team, you’ll receive a gift called “The Torn Curtain”. Thanks to our outreach team you’ve already been watching video testimonials about the torn curtain on social media. On Good Friday we’re encouraging you to invite your neighbors and friends to your home and talk about the torn curtain. Then on Easter morning, April 5, the Lord willing, I’ll preach a message called the Torn Curtain.

The two Scripture texts for the Resurrection Sunday message are on a bookmark that you received today. I encourage you to put it in your Bible and look at it regularly. And I want to teach you a song. After all, redeemed people sing the Word!

*And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.*

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<sup>14</sup> NIV “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.”

## Mark 15:38

*Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain...let us draw near.*

## Hebrews 10:19–22

3. *He gives us mercy and grace.* “So that we may receive mercy and find grace to help.” Whether we realize it or not, those are our two biggest needs in life, for God’s *mercy* and *grace*. “God, please don’t treat me as I deserve!” That’s a request for mercy. And, “God, please give me what I need yet don’t deserve!” That’s a request for grace.

And why would God extend to us such a marvelous offer? It’s all because of the One who is there on that throne. When a sinner approaches God trusting fully in the High Priest, Jesus the Christ, God offers that sinner unmerited pardon and unmerited help for Jesus’ sake. And one more thing about this offer.

4. *He gives us what we need at the right time.* “In time of need,” the text concludes. This is what we bring to God. *Need*. This is when we bring it to God, in our *time* of need. God’s help is timely because God’s timing is perfect!

Remember the subject at hand. The writer of Hebrews has been talking about the offer of God’s rest. He’s shown us that we have two wonderful resources for attaining God’s rest, His Word and His High Priest.

We haven’t sung this song in a long time, but the lyrics are so appropriate.

*No one understands like Jesus;  
He's a Friend beyond compare.  
Meet Him at the throne of mercy;  
He is waiting for You there.*

*No one understands like Jesus  
When the days are dark and grim.  
No one is so near, so dear as Jesus;  
Cast Your every care on Him.<sup>15</sup>*

### The Bottom Line: Because there is a High Priest...

1. *We can experience God’s rest today.* Are you struggling? Then approach His throne.
2. *We can anticipate God’s rest forever and ever.* And forever we will praise Him!

**Closing Song:** #417 “*No One Understands Like Jesus*” (all four verses)

### Community Group Discussion:

1. Last Sunday as well as today we’ve been marveling at the hope-giving message of Hebrews 4:12-16. In this wonderful passage we learn that God has given us resources that are vital to entering His rest. After reading the passage again, discuss what initially stands out most to you.
2. What is a priest? What do we learn about priests in the Old Testament? Verse 14 says that we have a priest. Why do we need a priest? Think carefully. Why do Christians need a priest?
3. What is true of our priest according to verse 15? What does it mean to say that He “in every respect has been tempted as we are”? How would our lives be different this week if we lived in light of this truth?
4. What does our priest desire to give us right now according to verse 16? Why is it significant that God’s throne is called a “throne of grace”?
5. Verse 16 says that we can approach God’s throne with “confidence”. That is a shocking statement. Why so? It’s also a true statement. What difference should it make in our lives practically speaking? After sharing, spend time as a group *praying the Word* by having several people offer prayers of both thanks and supplication.

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<sup>15</sup> Song by John W. Peterson