



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Joyful Christianity

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Hebrews 9:15-28

Clint Pressley

¹⁵ Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. ¹⁶ For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷ For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸ Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹ For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." ²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

²³ Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

(Pastor prays)

Yesterday for lunch, like almost every Saturday, I had a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I also had Cheeto Puffs with four Oreo cookies and a glass of Cheerwine. I know that I eat like a 9-year-old. I sat down to watch some television with Connie as we often do during lunch. She always has the remote control but she went to a documentary which she knows is the language of my heart. The documentary was on John Wesley. John Wesley is the founder of Methodism. So we turned it on and sat there in rapt attention, 10 minutes in and Connie left. I watched this

documentary on John Wesley, a man who came up in a godly home. His mother was godly. In fact, she is probably responsible for his method that would become Methodism. He grew up knowing the Bible. His Daddy was a preacher and he went to church every single Sunday, every time the doors were open. He went off to be a preacher at Oxford College. And after Oxford he wanted to do something good.

You know, you can be saved and not be nice; and you can be *not* saved and actually be a good person. So he wasn't yet converted but he wanted to do good. He thought he was a Christian. He went over to America from England; crossed the Atlantic on a ship with a bunch of Moravians. While on that ship, a storm hit in such a way that everybody on the boat thought they were going to die, including the Moravians. John Wesley was terrified. Below deck the Moravians gathered together and were singing hymns with joy. That stuck with him. He got to America and the ministry did not go well. He and his brother tried to minister to the Indians. Later he would say, "I was trying to preach the gospel I didn't know."

He left America dejected. And he came back to London, still thinking about the Moravians. He went over to Germany (where they originated) to study, to think. What is it they had that he didn't? He knew the Bible, knew The Ten Commandments, knew the church. Then one evening he was persuaded to go to a Bible study in a place called Aldersgate. He didn't want to be there. He was there reluctantly. And as the Bible study leader opened up a commentary written by Martin Luther, a commentary on the book of Romans, he heard the word "grace." And he says that for the first time he quit trying so hard to be something he wasn't. He says, "I felt that my heart was strangely warm. And I felt that I did trust Christ and Christ alone for salvation, and assurance was given to me. Christ had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

That day the Holy Spirit dug a well of deep joy in his heart that sustained him through a lifetime of struggle, pain, persecution and turmoil. And God lifted up an example for us of joyful Christianity, the kind of Christianity that sustains us and covers us and strengthens us, a Christianity squarely planted in the atoning work of Jesus on the cross.

And in this passage that means thinking deeply about the blood of Jesus and why the blood of Jesus is central to Christian joy and why we remember the blood with The Lord's Supper. And

not only that, I think this passage gives us attitudes to have and things to do as men and women who profess Jesus Christ as Lord.

If Jesus is Lord, Then Life is Good

Let's look at the attitudes, you'll find it there in verse 15. Here's the first one.

Let's rejoice in our mediator

Rejoice. I want you to be men and women who rejoice in Christ; rejoice in our mediator. Verse 15 is packed so join me there. ¹⁵ *Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.* That first word, "therefore." The word "therefore" is a transition word. It says that what I'm getting ready to say after "therefore" is built on everything I've just said before.

So what did he say before the "therefore"? He said that since Jesus entered into God's presence through His death and resurrection and He cleansed your conscience, since He's done that through His blood, He is the mediator of a new covenant.

Mediator. I would circle that word. A mediator stands between two parties and brings them together. We need a mediator. God is holy, we are sinners, and Jesus, the God-man, stands between. The Bible says there is one God and one mediator who is the man Jesus Christ. How are you going to know God? You know God through the mediator Jesus. We ought to rejoice in our mediator! Here is a picture of Christ as a mediator. He makes it so that you, yes *you*, you can actually know God. Join me there in verse 15. He is the mediator of who? Notice who he is the mediator to. ¹⁵ *Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called*

What a great word. This word "called" is not just standing in the door and calling out to your children hoping they will hear you and come home, it's time to eat supper. This word has a different power to it. This is more than just an invitation. I get lots of wedding invitations and graduation invitations and at the bottom they say RSVP. I then have a decision to make. Am I going to be able to make that party? That invitation, it doesn't necessarily have power over me. This word "called" is what the old Puritan used to call the *effectual* call. When God calls it has

effect. When we pray for God to work in somebody's life - you have a lost friend you're praying for God to save them. What you are praying for is that God's *call* would have an *effect*. The promise is that Jesus is the mediator of those who have been *called*. The emphasis is on the *caller* and not the *called*. It is God calling with such a power.

Think of it like this: the illustration. Jesus standing at the grave of Lazarus and He calls, "Lazarus, come forth!" The power was not in the dead man hearing; the power was in Jesus speaking. Or think of it like this. In Genesis Chapter 1, God says "Let there be light." The power is in what God *says*. This reminds us that your salvation is of God.

You rejoice in your mediator. He is the mediator for the called, and notice what the promise is. Still in verse 15, the promise is eternal inheritance. What you have there is this wonderful inheritance that is imperishable because it's eternal. That it is of such great quality because it is promised by God. And the promise is for those whom He redeemed. We've talked about that word. Do you see it in verse 15? He is the mediator of a new covenant so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance since a death has occurred. What does that death do? It redeems you, it redeemed us from the sin under the law. Redeems. That word redeem, we've used it before, it is the slave language of buying, purchasing someone out of slavery. Redeems.

I'm reading a book right now called "The Last Slave Ship in America." It came into the port of Mobile in 1860. The ship is called the Clotilda. 110 souls who were stolen from Africa were brought here on a bet. They were taken off that ship, the ship was set on fire and wasn't discovered until about 2012. And the story is told of those 110 men and women who were stolen out of Africa. You can go to Mobile right now and find a place called Africatown, where they established the community. In the 1920s people started getting interested in that story. They went to Africatown to interview some of the people. They met a man named Cudjo who had been stolen. It is 1920 now, he was stolen from Africa and brought to the United states in 1860. The Civil War came, five years a slave and then he was set free. He told the story of the day he got his freedom. He was working on the docks in Mobile Bay, Confederate soldiers were running out of town as the Union soldiers came into to set fire to all the cotton on the docks. The place was burning and the Union soldiers show up to Mobile Bay and the slaves standing there didn't know what to do. They asked the Union soldiers, "What do we do?" Cudjo said they

told him; you do whatever you want to do. They were not accustomed being free so they ask, "well where should we go?" The soldiers said to him, "You go wherever you want to go." If you go to the Mobile airport you see a picture of Cudjo there. Cudjo says that there was this mass joyful hysteria of being set free. That word "redeemed," you have it if you are in Christ. You have been set free. You are not a slave anymore to some sin that used to haunt you. You are not a slave anymore to some past that used to follow you. You are not defined anymore by what you've been through, you are defined by who you are, being purchased by the blood of Jesus. And you ought to rejoice in your mediator. Let's rejoice in our mediator.

Not only that.

Let's thank God for grace

Thank God for grace. I want you to understand grace, love grace and look at people without judgment. I want you to look at people who are in sin and say, "if it were not for the grace of God, that would be me." We need to thank God for grace. I will give you two examples. The first example is in verse 16-17. That will make this point. And then the second example is a religious one in verses 18-22. That will be my third point.

Let me just show you here in these verses that we need to thank God for grace. In verses 16 and 17 is a description of a last will and testament. So if you have a rich relative who is nearing death and said to you, "I've put your name in the will." When that person dies and that will is read and it's describing what you get, you get all those goods or money after the person's death. This is why the prodigal son story was so insulting. For him to come to his father and say, "give me my inheritance," he is saying, "I wish you were dead."

Now with that in mind let's go to verses 16-17. *¹⁶ For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷ For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.* You understand that there must be a death. But there's a great promise of God of forgiveness and joy and restoration. That promise does not take effect until the death of Jesus. Christ's death on the cross has activated the incredible riches of God that had been poured out on His children. For instance, the forgiveness is unleashed at the cross of Jesus. You have a great promise of forgiveness. God forgives you of your sin because of what Christ has done for you. The promise is of great peace or wholeness.

It's the great promise of having strength, you are son or daughter of God. You actually have been given the ability to forgive people who have wronged you. Look, if you are a son or daughter of God and have come out of some terrible relationship where you've been hurt or maybe abused, by God's grace, Christ is sufficient to bring healing and wholeness, change. Look, maybe you were some sort of terrible person before you became a Christian, here's what the gospel does. When we say conversion, we mean you are changed from being dead to being alive. The Gospel has the power to change you. Maybe you struggle with some sort of addiction, you know what the Gospel does, it changes desires. Do you know what the Gospel can do? It can make it so that you actually *love* your enemies. You understand that ours is a movement of grace. That movement of grace is rooted in the grace that God has given us at the cross.

I saw a young lady coming in this morning. She had emailed me earlier in the week about a question with the sermon hoping I could provide some answers for the questions in their study group. So I had told her, just e-mail it to me and I'll take care of it. Well, I forgot to respond. Just completely forgot. And when I saw her this morning and that's when I remembered I had not responded. So I saw her before she saw me and I thought, "Well I'll just duck away before she does see me." That was my first response, but she saw me so, okay. And I was like, "oh you know I forgot to e-mail you." And do you know what she said to me, she said, " Well as a Christian I have received such grace; I'll extend some grace to you." Now I hate to get hit in the face so hard with a "grace bomb" early on Sunday morning, but it is the truth. We are a movement of grace!

So let's you and I rejoice in Jesus Christ as our mediator. Let's not forget to thank God for grace. Have you ever received the grace of God found in Jesus? Have you put your faith in Christ and been changed radically? Have you been forgiven? Are you able to forgive? Have you been strengthened in the joy of the Lord which propels you forward? Can you say with John Wesley, "my heart has been strangely warmed"? Can you say, "I know that I've been saved by the grace of God found in Jesus"? Let's thank God for grace.

Let me give you a third thing to consider. It's a second illustration. It's in verses 18-22. The third thing is...

We need to meditate on the cost

We don't do this much anymore. Meditation has taken on some sort of far eastern thought. It is a Christian principle to meditate but what do we meditate on? We meditate on the Word of God. We meditate on what God has given us in Christ. So I just want us to meditate on the cost.

Now the first illustration was pretty easy, the will. The second illustration is a little more complicated, so we're gonna read it slowly starting in verse 18. As I do, you're gonna see the word "blood" six times. You're gonna hear it over and over again, the word "blood." So from the lavish use of the word "blood" as He describes the Old Testament, we are given a principle at the end of verse 22. *¹⁸ Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹ For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." ²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and here's the principle at the very end of verse 22, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

Here is Christianity. Christianity is not just following Jesus. John Wesley did that before he was a believer. Christianity is not just changing your behavior. Christianity is making sure that your life has come under the blood of Christ. Isn't that what Jesus said? We are going to take The Lord's Supper today and we are just thinking back to Jesus at the Last Supper. He met with His disciples. And Matthew says it's the same for us in Matthew 26:27-28. Matthew tells us that He took the cup and when He had given thanks, He held it up to His people. He said, you drink this, all of you, for this is my blood of the new covenant and it is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. You see now, you take verses 16 and 17, that's the will. And you take verses 18-22, and that is the picture of Old Testament religion; and the promise of God is forgiveness. It's a new covenant that is ratified at the cross, it is made valid. The forgiveness of God is validated at the cross. Not only ratified, God's people are sanctified, made so that you are cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Your sins taken away. It's necessary for Christianity; so that you and I might actually have a pursuit of holiness. It's why we take The Lord's Supper.

Now not because it saves us. Official Catholic doctrine is that the wafer and wine actually become— it's called transubstantiation—actually become the body and the blood of Jesus. And

taking the body and blood of Jesus is necessary for salvation. That's why being excommunicated is so terrible for Catholics because you can't actually get to church to have the body and blood of Jesus. We don't believe that. One step down would be *consubstantiation*, which is not believing that the elements actually become the blood and body, but that in some way that they still are grace-giving.

We don't even trust that it's the real presence. We believe that the grace of God saves us through faith in what Christ has done for us at the cross. We take The Lord's Supper so that we might remember, that we might focus, that we might turn our hearts to the goodness of God found in Jesus. I want you to meditate on the costs.

And I'm just gonna put one more in there. I want you to...

Trust our advocate

Verse 24 is a beautiful promise you should hold on to. You'll see that at the end of verse 24 is one of the greatest promises in the Bible. Join me in verse 24. ²⁴ *For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.*

What has Christ done for you? He died on the cross, God raised Him from the dead in victory. He met with His disciples after the resurrection, and then ascended into Heaven. And the Bible says that He has appeared to God on our behalf. This is what John says in 1 John 2:1. *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* It is possible to fight sin and beat sin, it is possible to be tempted and not sin. It is possible that as you grow in Christ you grow stronger and what used to be sin that you committed, you were able to resist them now. But you have been awake for awhile now and may have sinned, so John says, *But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* We have an advocate with the judge, the father; He is Jesus. Jesus, who is all man and all God. He is right and just and completely perfect.

And there is our hope. I'm asking you today to trust Christ as your advocate, to back up and remember the cost. I want you, as a Christian, to thank God for His grace. I don't want you to

just rejoice. Joy is a wonderful thing but *rejoice* in Christ as your mediator. You see, if Jesus Christ is Lord, life really is good.

(Pastor prays)