



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, October 2-8 (B) – Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Focus: *Listening to God's Word*

word of life

“Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days (God) has spoken to us by a Son...” Hebrews 1:1 (NRSV)

Read Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

The assigned second readings for the next seven weeks are all taken from the book of Hebrews. It is helpful to begin our time in this book with a brief overview.

1. *What do you know about the book of Hebrews?*
2. *Share any favorite passages from Hebrews.*

Notice the title of the book. Unlike other letters attributed to Paul, this book is introduced as “*The Letter to the Hebrews*.” Until the 4th century AD, it was assumed that Hebrews was a letter written by Paul to a community of Jewish Christians. The structure of Hebrews suggests otherwise.

3. *Look at the previous book in the New Testament – the letter of Paul to Philemon. Read Hebrews 1:1-7. Compare the beginning of Philemon with the beginning of Hebrews.*
4. *What similarities and differences do you notice?*

There is no salutation, no indication of the recipient, no word of greeting of grace and peace, no word of encouragement and thanksgiving in Hebrews. The style and theology of Hebrews is not typical of Paul's writings. The Greek grammatical structure is more sophisticated; and the central image describes Jesus as the great, perfect high priest whose suffering brings forgiveness and completeness for the whole world. (See Hebrews 2:17.)

5. *What do you know about the role of the high priest in the Jewish religious practices?*
6. *What does it mean to describe Jesus as “the merciful and faithful high priest”? (Hebrews 2:17)*

The book of Hebrews is written to a community of Christians well-versed in the Jewish ritual and sacred scripture. (Note the many quotes from scripture in the first chapter of Hebrews alone.) It was written to encourage the faithful to remain firm in their faith, trusting and believing that Jesus – the Son and heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2) – has made himself lower than the angels and has suffered and died for everyone (See Hebrews 2:9.) Believing this to be true, the believer is encouraged to remain faithful, even in the midst of suffering and doubt.

7. *How does knowing that Jesus suffered and died encourage and strengthen faith?*

Hebrews begins with verses which echo the beginning of the gospel of John. God's Word created all things. God's Word was made known through the prophets of old, but its hearing was incomplete. Finally, “in these last days” (Hebrews 1:2 NRSV) God has spoken to us “by a Son”. (Hebrews 1:2)

8. *Have someone read John 1:1-18 while the group looks at Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:9-12. What similarities and differences do you notice?*
9. *What does it mean to you to be spoken to by “God's Son?”*

God's Son spoke God's Word not just through words, but more importantly, through the Son's suffering. We are joined to Christ's suffering as brothers and sisters of the same heavenly Father. (Hebrews 2:10-12)

word among us

The high school football coach was trying to teach a fundamental passing route to his corps of young receivers. He had written a description of the play in the team playbook and had required everyone on the team to study it. He had diagrammed the route on the blackboard in the locker room, filling the board with x's and o's and arrows tracing the route the receiver was to take. He had tried in a variety of ways to explain what he wanted his athletes to do. But they just didn't get it. No matter what he said – no matter what imagery he used to describe the play or what name he gave to identify the route – the young players just didn't understand. Finally, the coach walked to the offensive huddle, tapped the receiver on his shoulder, and said, "Watch! I'll show you," as he ran the play and made the catch.

1. *Have you ever had a difficult time understanding a concept until someone showed you? If so, describe the situation.*

"Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days (God) has spoken to us by a Son..." (Hebrews 1:1 NRSV) Since the beginning of time, God has tried time and again to communicate and be in relationship with God's people. God gave them the Torah – the sacred writings – and the law as a playbook on how to live in relationship with God. God sent the prophets who were inspired to speak God's Word, articulating God's Word of grace and judgment.

But God's people still strayed from the route of faithfulness. They didn't understand the words; they couldn't grasp the concept. No matter how hard they tried, they just didn't get.

2. *What words do we often speak in worship to acknowledge and confess our failing to "get" what God intends for us?*
3. *What words are spoken to articulate God's response to our confession?*

In Jesus, we hear the final word of God for us. It is a word of servanthood, of unmerited grace, of suffering and sacrificial love. We acknowledge this Word of grace every time we confess our faith: "For us, and for our salvation, Jesus came down from heaven." God speaks; and the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us. Thanks be to God!

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people.

Living in community with one another requires communication and relationship. We use words to express our needs and our desires. But there are times when words alone can't convey what is to be understood. As we live in Christian community, our actions speak louder than words. The same is true for God. We hear God's desires for us, but we don't always get it. So God does something extraordinary. God sends the Son to show us. The Son suffered and died to embody the Word of grace and forgiveness from God.

4. *How has God shown love and mercy in your life?*

Prayer

O Word of grace, we give you thanks that you not only speak your Word to us, but you show it to us through Christ our Lord. Amen

last word

Each day, listen for ways
that God is speaking to you.

Daily Faith Practices

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