



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, October 9-15 (B) – Hebrews 4:12-16

Focus: *Be bold!*

word of life

“Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:16 (NRSV)

Read Hebrews 4:12-16

The reading for today reflects on two prominent themes in the book of Hebrews: the word of God, and Jesus as the great high priest.

The word of God was introduced to the reader of Hebrews in the first verses of the letter. The word is spoken by the prophets; but it is most clearly heard through the Son. (Hebrews 1:1-2) The word is creative, life-giving, merciful, forgiving; it sustains all things. (Hebrews 1:3)

1. *How would you describe the Word of God?*

The word of God is manifested in three ways: the written word (the scriptures); the spoken word (proclamation); and the word-made-flesh (Jesus, the living Word).

But the verses for today remind us that the Word of God has a cutting edge to it. “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword ... it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12 NSRV)

2. *How is the word of God like a two-edge sword?*

3. *Is this imagery comforting or troubling (or both)?*

Note the adjectives used to describe the word of God: living, active, sharper, piercing, judging, hidden, naked, laid bare. (Hebrews 4:12-13) The word of God is a word of both grace and of judgment. It exposes who we really are; it reveals our sinfulness, even our hidden thoughts and intentions.

Having been exposed to the truth of our brokenness, how then can we dare to turn to God? The answer is found in the prominent theme of the book of Hebrews – Jesus as the great high priest. The role of the high priest will be examined in greater detail in the coming weeks; but the imagery of Jesus as the high priest answers the question of how we can approach God. “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15 NSRV)

4. *What does it mean to you to know that Jesus has been tempted, but did not sin?*

Because of Jesus, we can “approach the throne of grace with boldness” (Hebrews 4:16) The word “approach” (sometimes translated “draw near”) is rich in meaning. It is used to describe the liturgical action of the priest approaching the curtain to enter into the presence of God to seek forgiveness for the people. It invokes the image of subjects approaching a king or queen seeking their favor. It describes the act of prayer – of a sinful human being daring to draw near to almighty God.

It is with an attitude of boldness that we dare approach God. The source of that boldness is in Christ – the great high priest who has interceded for us, who faced all the temptations of earthly life, but who was faithful to the end and did not sin.

word *among us*

We don't often associate **boldness** with the Christian life. Meekness, humility, and graciousness seem to be more suitable attributes. But the writer of Hebrews encourages the reader to **be bold** when approaching God.

1. *What does it mean to be bold when approaching God?*
2. *Are there pitfalls in such boldness?*

One of Luther's most famous quotes are the simple words, "Sin **boldly** ..." These radical words can be spoken only in light of the phrase which follows them, "... but believe and rejoice in Christ even more **boldly**, for he is victorious over sin, death, and the world."

Luther, like the author of Hebrews, knew that we dare to act and pray with conviction and **boldness** only because Jesus has gone before us and walks with us. Jesus knows our weaknesses and encourages us in our struggles. Most importantly, Jesus, who was without sin, took our sin and brokenness on the cross. Because of Christ, and in Christ, we can dare to be **bold** as we approach God and as we live out our faith. We do so with the **bold** belief that God's grace is greater than anything we can do or say.

3. *What did Luther mean when he said, "Sin boldly"?*
4. *In what ways are you "bold" in your faith?*

In some liturgies, the participant is invited to be **bold** in praying the Lord's Prayer: "As Jesus has taught us, so we are **bold** to say, 'Our Father'" Jesus gives us the words to dare to approach God as a child approaches a loving parent.

5. *Why does it take boldness to pray the Lord's Prayer? Explain.*

When we dare to approach God, we receive the gifts of "...mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16 NSRV) All this we receive because of the great high priest, Jesus Christ.

faith practice *in daily life*

Hear God's word and share in God's supper.

God's word is active and living. It brings grace and forgiveness; it also brings judgment. It exposes the truth about each of us. It causes us to recognize our brokenness and our need for God's grace.

We need to hear God's word through scripture and proclamation. We need to trust God's word as it is made known in Jesus.

It is God's word in Christ – the word made flesh – who gives us the boldness to approach God. We are empowered and given help in our times of need as we hear and know God's word.

6. *How have you experienced God's word in your life?*

Prayer

Empower us, O Living Word, to act and pray with **boldness**, for we can do this only through Christ our Lord. Amen

last word

Reflect on ways
you can be bold in your faith.