

## Put the Car in Drive

Sermon 2018-10-28 - Year B - Pentecost 10-23 - The Rev. Christopher Klukas

- Story of getting out of a parallel parking spot and accidentally having the car in reverse instead of drive.
- It was really important for my car to be going forward, not backward, and it is the same with our Christian faith.
- The background of the book of Hebrews is that it was written to a group of Hebrew Christians who, because of persecution, were thinking about abandoning their Christian faith and returning to a Jewish understanding of the faith.
- The point of this whole letter is to convince them that they should stick with Jesus.

### Christians Must Grow

- 5:12 - "By this time you ought to be teachers."
- John Maxwell "You never really know something until you teach it to someone else."<sup>1</sup>
- How comfortable would you be in teaching the faith to someone else?
- If that thought makes you nervous, what is holding you back?
- 6:1 - "Leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity"
  - When we do this, we are not leaving the elementary doctrine behind, we are instead building on the foundation (6:1) that has been laid.
  - You can't learn to read without first being able to identify letters and know their sounds. This is a skill I still use each and every day. But if that were the only thing I knew about reading at this point in my life I would be in trouble!
  - "not laying again a foundation of" (6:1-2)
    - "repentance from dead works and of faith toward God," - Relates to the freedom from the law that we have in Christ.
    - "and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands," - Relates to Baptism and confirmation.
    - "the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." It is important for Christian to grasp the future towards which we are all headed.
- Instead of going on to maturity, these believers seem to be stuck in these elementary doctrines, still rehearsing them and testing them, unable to move forward. Stuck in park.
- Some of them even seem to be moving backwards, like my car!

### The Danger of Apostasy

- All of us move backwards in our faith from time to time.
  - It is not uncommon to slip into a period of spiritual stagnation. Perhaps life gets busy and you neglect to spend time in prayer and in the word.
  - Perhaps you have gone through periods where you were not faithful in participating in Christ's body the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Maxwell, John C. *The 360 Degree Leader with Workbook: Developing Your Influence from Anywhere in the Organization*. (Thomas Nelson, 2011), 236.

- Perhaps you have had doubts from time to time.
- While these things aren't good, they do happen, and you can get back on track.
- The author of this letter, however, goes on to describe some severe apostasy and its implications. 6:4-6.
- These words have caused severe worry for many. Let me suggest that even the fact that these words might make you worry is likely evidence that you don't fall into the category they describe.
  - "We are not here dealing with the sincere believer who is depressed about his spiritual failure, or the backslider who has temporarily lost interest in the things of God. We are here confronted with fierce opposition to Christ and his gospel, public rebellion against Christian things and a determination to bring Christ's work to an end."<sup>2</sup>
  - In 6:7-8 the author gives us the example of land producing either good fruit or thorns and thistles. This alludes to Gen 3:17-18 - Thorns and thistles. Rejecting Christ in this way would be returning to a fallen state.
    - Ephesians 2:12 - Separated from Christ, without hope.
  - The point is that if you have shared in the Holy Spirit and have been in fellowship with Christ, and then you reject the source of your salvation, you are in great peril because you have rejected the very one who can draw you to God.
- It is never our place to judge whether someone has fallen this far. We can always pray for God's mercy on such a person, asking that their hearts would soften and return.

### **The Hope of Christ**

- The author here is certain that the believers to whom he is writing don't fall into this category. 6:9.
- I, too, feel certain that you folks don't fall into this category either. These verses are here as a warning to those who would consider turning away.
  - *"Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it...how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?"* (Hebrews 2:1, 3a, ESV)
- Let us not be those who go backward or even fall away.
- Let us instead move forward in the faith, moving beyond spiritual milk to eat spiritual meat. And turning around to teach those who are younger in the faith the things we ourselves have learned.
- And let us all set our eyes on the hope we have in Jesus Christ!
- 6:11-12.

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews: Christ above All* (The Bible Speaks Today; Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 114.