

## Hebrews 13 – While I Have Your Attention

1. As the writer of Hebrews wraps up their sermon (for it is far more a sermon than a book), they are going to pepper us with instructions on what to do with the information we have just received: to recap, we have completely rearranged our heroes and placed Jesus where he truly is de jure and MUST be de facto in our lives – at the very top, the highest of heroes, the greatest of Lords, the King of Kings.
2. We will continue to honor Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We will continue to read our OT and learn from it...but when we want to know how to mirror heaven on earth, when we need to focus on who and what we are – we look at Jesus.
3. What does that look like day by day?
4. **Hebrews 13:1** We are to treat each other as brothers and sisters. Jesus expanded that duty to love to strangers and enemies and if we want to reflect heaven, we have to follow Jesus' lead here. But there is something more here that we need to address: we love each other as brothers and sisters. We need to learn how to form dear, sweet friendships that are non-sexual. And the world HATES that and will do everything it can to stop it.
5. The 1989 movie, "When Harry Met Sally", was all about the impossibility of loving someone of the opposite sex as a dear friend but not a sexual target. The world agrees with the film and, in fact, stretches the meaning of male, female, sexual, relationship, etc. until everybody is guilty of being bad to everyone.
6. Not among us. Women are people, not prey. Men are people, not punching bags. We are both here on purpose. Jesus knew and loved many women who traveled with him and the apostles – all while being chaste. It can be done and must be done among us. Sexual immorality among Christians splits churches and makes the devil clap with glee.
7. Love one another, but as brothers and sisters. Let's skip down to **Hebrews 13:4**. "Adultery" is a bigger word than sexual sin. It refers to breaking covenant and that can be done by abuse, violence,

desertion, etc. We are not to join the world in the way they treat marriage. Gay people getting married will not ruin marriage; straight people have already ruined it for most. When Kami and I speak of being married for over 40yrs, people always bring up how odd that is. How sad.

8. That odd passage in First Corinthians 11 about coverings is just about indecipherable to non-Semitic people, but it is speaking about how we treat each other. A wife is to cover herself – meaning that she is not to speak ill of her husband to others. She does not uncover his faults and shame him (Nadine Bolz and her statement about her husband). A man does not act toward his wife as if Jesus was not present. He does not cover his head, but honors Jesus as he lives with and loves God's daughter.
9. **Hebrews 13:2-3**. In the days in which this sermon was written, there was no safety net for the poor. They often traveled about, looking for kindness (how shocked I was to be asked only for a quarter or a dollar). In many places, sleeping outside was to invite attack (as it is, sadly, again in the US). As mirrors of heaven, as temples and priests, our job is to intervene and show kindness and grace to the poor and strangers.
10. In the day of this sermon, many Christians were being imprisoned for their faith. They would pass banners declaring "Caesar is Lord!" and disagree, saying Jesus was Lord. That was deeply unpopular and even dangerous. Not participating in the ritual worship of Caesar and government was considered borderline treasonous – making one an undesirable.
11. When you visited a prisoner, you would be connected with them in the eyes of the government. This writer is calling Christians out to take risks (most prisons worldwide do not feed or clothe the prisoners. If family do not bring it, they don't have it. We are to be the family for those who have no family. That is hospitality).
12. **Hebrews 13:4-6**. Fear of losing money and being in need is epidemic in our society. This writer reminds us that we are pilgrims, not plantation owners. Allow the money to leave you and go to

another who has a greater need (the Browns feeding us KFC and Coke, the lady who said she'd probably give the money to someone).

13. We have God. If we become poor and hungry because of our love of God, our suffering will not be forever. Hard words, but it was a very hard time.
14. **Hebrews 13:7, 17-18.** And the last verses for today – Remember who brought you to this dance. Our shepherds work tirelessly and you don't see any of it. Meetings, prayers, reaching out and loving on people all happens off the stage. I do a few things as well, but even I just shake my head and wonder at the dedication and love the shepherds at Fourth Avenue have.
15. They need prayer. Satan hates them. He hates me. I could give you examples of Satan coming after Kami and me but I don't think that's necessary. What IS necessary is prayer for not only the shepherds and me but prayers of thanks for those who taught you along the way.
16. While I do not believe and worship in the way I was taught, I received from my teachers a love of Jesus and a dedication to living a Christian life. I owe them so much. Those gray haired ladies in damp church basements laid a foundation in my life that has sustained me thus far. I pray for them and thank God for them.
17. (Charlie Morris – “We're here to make sure you can do your job”) Make leadership in the church a joy, not a burden. Have a good look through the Pentateuch to see what God thinks of complainers and whiners. Look at the list of gifts in Romans 12 and First Corinthians 12 and see that judging, whining and complaining aren't among them.
18. Make the giving of joy a central part of your life. How can you bring joy to the person in front of you. And then, show them heaven.