**Hebrews 9:1-14**

**Comfort in the Reality of Christ’s Real Prescence**

**Intro**

**How many of you have hear the phrase that “the picture does not do it justice”?**

**For instance, think of the Grand Canyon…**

**Kari, please add a picture of the Grand Canyon… Never been, and I’ve heard pictures do not serve it justice**

**What kind of responses do people have when looking at the image?**

**Now, what kind of response is there when you are there in person?**

**A very different response right? The image gives us an idea of grandeur of the reality, but we are only taken aback, we really only ever stand in awe of the real physical object. In other words, when we are face to face, when we are in the real presence of the object, we have a very different response, right?**

**My hope is that today’s passage will help you stand in awe of our glorious Savior.**

**Please turn in your bibles to Hebrews 9. That will be on page \_\_\_\_\_\_ in the bible under the chair in front of you.**

**Follow along as I read verses 1 through the first part of verse 15**

**1 Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary.**

**2 For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place.**

**3 Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies,**

**4 having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron’s rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant;**

**5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.**

**- Phew! Boy, am I glad we don’t have to get into those details today!**

**6 Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship,**

**7 but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.**

**8 The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing,**

**9 which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience,**

**10 since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.**

**11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;**

**12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**

**13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,**

**14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

**15 For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant,**

**It’s glorious to see how in verses 11—15, the author of Hebrews highlights the reality, what the picture pointed to….a real person…We no longer have a picture, but rather the real thing, the real presence and we can stand before Him in awe!**

**We are continuing our study of the book of Hebrews.**

**Last week, Pastor Rob reminded us that the last couple of chapters and these upcoming chapters are hard. He has also reminded us that the overall message of the book of Hebrews is simple, right, Jesus is in fact Better, but when we get into the details it can become complicated.**

**My hope is that, as we get into the details and work through the hard stuff, we have our theme this year be the result: Fixing our Hearts on Jesus.**

**After our study today we hope that our response is to find Comfort in the Reality of Christ’s Real Prescence**

**In order to do that, let’s look at Three truths about our essential need in life that will force us to look to Christ alone for comfort.**

**Before we continue let me remind you of the context of the book of Hebrews.**

**The book of Hebrews was written to a group of individuals going through intense suffering.**

**When Christianity was in its early stages, it was considered a subsect of Judaism.**

**Judaism as an ancient religion was recognized as an authorized religion in the Roman Empire**

**As Christianity became more and more distinct from Judaism, and it could not adhere to the false system of Roman worship, Christianity then became more and more of a persecuted religion.**

**And many who first found Christianity attractive, having enjoyed the new shiny religion of Christianity, began to see that the shine had worn off when that persecution came…**

**In the sufferings, we see how quickly Christians start losing relationships…started losing occupations, property, wealth**

**And many, ultimately, lost their lives.**

**You can imagine the temptation was to simply return to the safe haven of the old religion and abandon this thing called Christianity and the person of Christ.**

**That is the very warning we were given just a few weeks ago, right? Do not return to Judaism! Hold fast to your confession of Christ!**

**We continue today, looking at how suffering and uncertainty can lead us down two directions…One leads towards the temptations of this world.**

**We may not be tempted to go back to Judaism, but we sure are tempted to go back into the world.**

**Just as the writer of Hebrews wrote these words for real people, enduring real suffering, we have these words apply to our real challenges, suffering, and uncertainty today!**

**We must ask ourselves, what is that challenge doing… how are we responding? Is it making us more and more dependent upon Christ. Or are we running scared?**

**The other direction that suffering and uncertainty can lead us is towards Christ!**

**Charles Spurgeon said, “I have learned to kiss the waves that throw me upon the rock of ages.”**

**You know, part of the Hebrew audience was thinking about going back to a picture and abandoning the reality of Christ.**

**Let us be thrown upon the real Christ! Let our neediness teach us to kiss those waves, because they will launch us into the arms of our Savior!**

**So, let’s focus on…**

1. **The Picture of Our Need—Communion with God**

**Have you ever paused and thought about the fact that we have a great need to have communion with God?**

**God made us relational beings that need to have a relationship with Him…and He desires to have communion with us as well.**

**I know that it’s easy to want to skip over the books of the law in the OT… You start off reading Genesis thinking, “yeah, this is exciting, strange, entertaining!”**

**Then you get to Exodus and maybe think, “Oh yeah, God is awesome!”**

**Then suddenly you get to Exodus 25 and Leviticus and all that changes…You suddenly start to skip over a few things ☺**

**I get, I get it. Some of the items listed there can be a bit daunting… perhaps some of you may even consider it boring…**

**But let me encourage you with this… God is teaching us, through those books, that He desires to dwell with us. Hence, the tabernacle…**

**It also teaches that God wants us to worship Him and have a relationship with Him…Hence the provision of the sacrifices to cleanse the sin of the people.**

**The temples were meeting places between man and God.**

**The God of the universe, who spins galaxies in His hands, who created the stars, wants to dwell with His people.**

**This concept is embedded in the structure of the OT tabernacle and temple.**

**Exodus 25:8 “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.**

**In our text there are 3 parts of this communion with God which the tabernacle items picture….**

1. **Fellowship with God**

**What is the most common way that fellowship occurs between two people?**

**When you want to fellowship…what do you do?**

**Eat a meal together….**

1. **Eating and drinking with God (table/sacred bread)**

**The point of the table with sacred bread is not mysterious.**

**It signifies, God and man eating together.**

**What does it take to have a meal with someone at their home?**

**You must be invited first…otherwise that would be kind of creepy if you just show up unannounced!**

**Also, somebody has to be home, right?…waiting for you?!**

**This is how we are invited to…**

1. **Abiding in God’s House (lampstand)**

**The light of the lampstand was to be kept lit at all times….according to God’s instructions, day or night….**

**It tells us that God is home. God is waiting. God wants to dwell with His people.**

**We should also desire a fellowship that is characterized by**

1. **Intimate dependence (mana, incense – Psalm 141:2)**

**God had ordained that a sample of the mana that he fed His people with in the wilderness, would be stored there in the tabernacle**

**Dwelling with God means that you have a Host who provides you with your daily needs.**

**Remember the line from the Lord’s prayer….”Give us this day our daily bread….”!!!**

**There’s a reason for that line. Reminds us of our need…and that He is the only one that can fulfill it.**

**Also the sweet smelling incense that wafted in and through the tabernacle was representing the acceptance of God’s people and their dependent prayers.**

**The picture embedded in the Old Covenant tabernacle is one of beautiful communion with God….**

**A second part of that communion with God that the tabernacle represents is His people’s**

1. **Purpose**

**As I’ve mentioned, we are created to worship and have a relationship with our God.**

1. **Worship/service — “Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship”**

**I know we think of “worship” as often singing praises to God and it certainly includes that. But the word worship simply means offering our lives to God as we dwell with Him.**

**The Greek word for worship,** λατρεία, **means a type of “service”**

**What type of service would that mean for us?**

**Well, God’s people have a…**

1. **Priestly role—Aaron’s rod**

**Among other things, Aaron’s rod, also being stored in the tabernacle, indicated God has chosen those who would dwell with Him and represent Him….a priestly people through whom would represent Him to the world.**

**And finally, regarding His people’s purpose, God had given them**

1. **Instructions on living out the values of God—the tablets of the covenant**

**Anyone know what the Law is? Is it just the 10 commandments?**

**God was leading His people and wanting them to follow His directions…**

**God was saying, if you are going to be my people, if you are going to be my bride, if you are going to live and dwell with me, then I would like you to know my values….here they are….and the summary is Love me…and love others….that is a summary of the law….**

**Then, we come to this point in the text that mentions the cherubim of glory**

**Think of this scene…Communion with God..surrounded by glorious cherubim….**

**The high privilege we have of receiving the invitation to dwell with the God of the universe…that status is…**

1. **Status—Glorious**

**Friends you can study the intricate detail of the tabernacle and its various meanings intensely.**

**You can search online for video representations of the tabernacle and images of what it looked like.**

**But like the author of Hebrews says, I “cannot now speak in detail”**

**The point is this, the Old Covenant…and what God did in that tabernacle/temple thing…was to give a picture…..**

**A picture of God wanting to dwell with His people.**

**This is not new.**

**This was how it was supposed to be from creation!**

**In fact, if you pay attention to scripture, you will find that the tabernacle and the way that it is set up parallels the Garden of Eden….**

**Where God was dwelling and fellowshipping with Adam and Eve. The Eden-like rest we spoke of a couple of months ago.**

**Our need as humans is and always was communion with God dwelling with Him in His home.**

**In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were walking with God**

**In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were talking with God**

**In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were meant to be dependent upon God….**

**The tabernacle was a remote and faint picture showing God’s people still needed communion with Him.**

**We all seek of ways to find that home that we ever so long for.**

**Through imperfect means each one of us is seeking to find significance, permanence, something to grasp that is real, stable, lasting….but it is illusive…**

**We grab on to things we think are permanent**

**The praise of man**

**Possessions**

**Relationships**

**Quickly, though, we find that these feeble means of seeking to fulfill our need dissolves…it disappears.**

**We find that greatest need is communion with the only ETERNAL and EVERLASTING PERMANENT ENTITY which gives us MEANING/SIGNIFICANCE/PURPOSE…**

**This is where the problem with our need lies….**

1. **The Problem with Our Need—A Perpetually Defiled Conscience**

**Those of you who know scripture, if the tabernacle and temple were supposed to be shadows of the Garden of Eden**

**Then a legitimate question is what is the difference between the tabernacle and the garden of Eden??**

**The answer lies in the pages that most Bible readers seem to skip over…. ….Exodus/Leviticus**

**You can easily read Gen 1 & 2 about creation and the garden of Eden and live there…but you die in Exodus/Leviticus..**

**WHY? The sacrifice, the intricate instructions of the priests, the veils and the curtains….All of that…what is that…why should we care??**

**In part, it is all the elements that indicate barriers and problems in our relationship with the God with whom we need communion….**

**The difference between the Garden of Eden and the tabernacle are several**

**There is barrier after barrier to the actual physical presence of God in the Holy of Holies..veil after veil….**

**What is required in the tabernacle to cleanse a portion of God’s holy home where a sliver of His glory dwelled in the Holy of holies… blood…**

**Blood was like the divine Clorox agent decontaminating God’s Holy Home so that His people could come in and fellowship with him, enjoy their purpose, and experience the glory of being his people….**

**You may ask, well, why would God even allow for a people that grumbled, rejected, and turned to evil ways be cleansed at all.**

**He delights in cleansing His people because it is the way that He is able to dwell with them!**

**Blood represented justice, God is a just God. Those who dwell with Him must be righteous…**

**If you were unjust, that deserved death, and you could not dwell with God….**

**But God permitted a picture —a substitute— to bear the cost….animals…..**

**There had to be a cost….there had to be payment for unrighteousness…otherwise there would be no justice.**

**The difference between the tabernacle and the Garden of Eden was the blood of sacrifices in God’s Holy Home….and all the barriers that separated us from God….**

**Our text says of this picture…..,**

**Hebrews 9:6-9**

**6 Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship,**

**7 but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.**

**8 The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing,**

**9 which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience,**

**Here is the problem….to have communion with the Most Holy God, the Perfect, Creator of the universe….I have to be pure….**

**My NEED IS TO COMMUNE WITH GOD**

**MY PROBLEM IS I CAN’T!!!!**

**BECAUSE I AM GUILTY BEFORE HIM,**

**My conscience shouts out unclean, guilty, shameful!!**

**You know, we often hold others to such high standards, but how often do you turn those standards on yourself?**

**Can you truthfully say that you could uphold the same standards?**

**Think about it…when your spouse is doing something that you believe is not right because that is not how you asked them to do it…if you flipped it on yourself, would you be doing things exactly how you asked?**

**…**

**In other words, how often do you find yourself saying “You should…” rather than “I should…”**

**I think we all know that we would fail our own standards…We would fall short of our own standards…What hope do we have of keeping God’s?**

**We know that if we break one of God’s standards, we are responsible for breaking them all!**

**And Romans tells us that we have all fallen short!**

**We cannot get away with a single one**

**And in all of this our conscious condemns us.**

**We are already condemned…yet there’s times that we seek to suppress that.**

**We feel that our need for communion with God is “nagging” at us…our conscience is “nagging” at us…so we seek ways to tone it down.**

**“I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; and consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. …..For myself, as no doubt for most of my friends, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom. The supporters of this system (of morality) claimed that it embodied the meaning - the Christian meaning, they insisted - of the world. There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and justifying ourselves in our erotic revolt: we would deny that the world had any meaning whatever.”**

**― Aldous Huxley,**[**Ends and Means**](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/3220076)

**The problem is that we cannot!**

**You NEED COMMUNION WITH YOUR GOD… our conscience is shouting…**

**BUT YOU CAN’T HAVE IT BECAUE YOU ARE GUILTY.**

**What is it that drives us to perform, or to be somebody, or to accumulate wealth, or to drown ourselves in earthly pleasures**

**Underneath it all is a guilty conscience….reflecting our alienation from our God and our exile from our Home**

**Gen 3:24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.**

**Ezra 9:15 “O Lord God of Israel, You are righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as it is this day; behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this.”**

**Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.**

**All of our attempts to drown out our guilty conscience by**

**Confronting it—“Stop doing that”**

**Minimizing it—“You are just human”**

**Shifting responsibility for it—“Your upbringing made you this way”**

**Desensitizing one to it—“continue until you feel no shame”**

**Rationalizing it—“You’re right because you have been victimized”**

**Masking it—“Take these chemicals to help you feel better”**

**Excusing it—“You’re genetically prone to this”**

**Denying it—“ You’re a good person”**

**Justifying it—“That is not wrong”**

**Are just as ineffective as what we are talking about here in Hebrews…**

**Hebrews: 10: 11Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;**

**They all may have a sense of temporary relief, like a picture of the Grand Canyon, giving us an idea of the beauty… but it will never be the real deal…. It will never be as breath-taking as the real presence**

**At this point you may feel as though you have no hope…as though it’s all pointless…**

**Allow me to share some hope…**

**When we are faced with challenges…in this case the challenge of not being able to fulfill our need…what do we do…who do we turn to…how do we respond?**

**Let me remind you what Charles Spurgeon said…**

**“I have learned to kiss the waves that throw me upon the rock of ages.”**

**Whom should we be thrown upon at this very moment?**

1. **The Person for our Need—Jesus Christ**

Remember the words of Romans 8:1? Let us stand firm on this confession…

**8 Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus.**

**Are we truly in Christ?...Friends, let’s stop looking for the picture and let’s allow ourselves to be thrown at the actual presence of a person…Only in Him will our need be fulfilled…only in Him will we find the quietness we are looking for…no guilt, no shame, no condemnation!**

**Here is the deal….what we needed was not a picture…but a person…**

**A person who was one of us and understood the need to commune with God…and had experienced the delight of that and wants to give it to others.**

**What we needed was**

**A person who fulfilled the purpose, role, and instructions for God people’s….and did so perfectly….**

**who did not have the problem we had—a perpetually defiled conscience**

**What we needed was a person….who would not overlook the cost of sin but in justice ensure the price was paid**

**What we needed was a person who fulfilled the picture of the mercy seat sprinkled with blood of that justice, by offering His own divine self to bear the cost of others’ guilt**

**What we needed was a person who had the divine authority to say, “you are forgiven” to clear the conscience of man**

**What we needed was a person…who lives forever and never is to be replaced…others have died and stayed dead.**

**What we needed was a person,**

**who was willing to be cast out of the Father’s divine home, be cut off from the Father’s communion, cast outside of the Father’s house, so that we could home to the Father.**

**What we needed was a person,**

**who was the light of the Father’s house, to lead us home.**

**11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;**

**12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**

**13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,**

**14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

**Friends, if you are here today and don’t know Christ…maybe you don’t even know why you are here or why you came…I think it is for you to hear this…**

**Jesus lived a perfect life…died in your place, in my place…rose from the grave…so that you could have something better than a picture.**

**You know, if you’ve ever spoken with someone that has experienced first-hand the beauty of the Grand Canyon…they would explain to you that you would not be satisfied with a mere picture of it…they would urge you to fly there, run there, do whatever you can to experience it yourself.**

**I am urging you to run to Jesus and find His real presence…do not settle for anything less…for it will never satisfy.**

**Brothers and sisters, Jesus is with us and in Him we are made complete…in Him we find fulness of joy and comfort…**

**Let’s seek Him together…One way we can do that is by continuing to seek a relationship with Him…through the scriptures…and by continuing to gather together…**

**We are excited about our summer series that’ll begin in June because we’ll have the opportunity to apply the comfort of Christ in our lives as we see the emphasis of it in John 13-17. I hope that this sermon is the precursor to that series in your life. I pray that you fix your eyes and your heart on Christ whenever challenging times come your way for we have something better than a picture…we have the real presence of Christ! The Solid Rock on which we stand!**

* **Prayer**