

"Hold On"

As we continue our Lenten sermon series based on Hebrews Chapter 10, our text tonight, which is printed in your bulletin on page 5, is verse 23. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."

Now, I have to admit, as I studied this verse over the last few days, I found myself constantly wanting to rewrite it in my mind and here's why. First, the word "fast" just wasn't doing it for me. When I talk about being firmly attached to something, "fast" is not my first choice of words. I could say, "I held fast for dear life as my wife accelerated out of our neighborhood" but I'd rather just say, "I held on tight. It just makes more sense to me so, in my mind, I thought, "Let us hold on tightly to the confession of our hope without wavering."

It was a start. But then I began thinking, "what is the confession of our hope?" Someone's confession is what it is they believe and their hope is what it is that they think will save them. For Christians, we believe that our hope is in Jesus Christ, right? So I went with that. "Let us hold on tight to what it is we believe about Jesus Christ without wavering." But then I got hung up on "without wavering!" It just didn't seem descriptive enough. I thought about "without hesitating" or "without thinking twice" but then I had this brilliant thought. Unwavering to me really means "without changing my mind." And just to make this whole thing complete, I also changed the last part from "for he who promised is faithful" to "because God is constant and true."

So in my mind, here is what I came up with for verse 23: **"Let us hold on tightly to what it is we believe about Jesus Christ, without changing our minds, because God is constant and true."**

Now, this is not the new "Pastor Lew" translation of the Bible. This is simply how I interpret this passage of Scripture and how I see it applying to me and my life. I want God to allow me to hold on to what it is I believe about Jesus Christ, that he is the final sacrifice who died once and for all; that he opened the curtain for me and is the great

high priest. That now I can draw near to him in full assurance of faith. I don't want anything to change my mind, because I need Jesus. I'm not constant and true. I'm a sinner! Sure, I fight that sin everyday but no matter what, I always fail at living up to what God expects of me. But He is constant and He is true. That's what I want to hold on to without wavering; without changing my mind. What about you? Do you want the same? Hopefully you do, but trust me, this is easier said than done.

Think about just how much we change our minds. Have you ever ordered lunch or dinner only to flag down the server 5 minutes later. "Excuse me but can I adjust my order? I changed my mind." We all do it. From what brand of mayonnaise we were planning to buy or the vacation plans we might make, inevitably, something causes us to change our minds. In fact changing minds is the goal of advertising and certainly the goal of any sales-person. I can say this with confidence, because for most of my professional career, before I became a pastor, I was in sales and my goal every day was to change someone's mind.

I kind of laugh now, but I remember back in my sales days all these techniques we were constantly trained on for gaining agreement with customers or "closing the sale." One I remember quite well is called the "emotion close." This is where the sales person attempts to change behavior by playing to their customers emotions. A sales person might ask questions like, 'How would using this product make you feel?' Or, "Don't you want to be like 90% of your professional peers who use this product?" Notice what's missing in this approach is actually what benefit the product brings. But this technique can be effective with people because it creates an emotional desire.

This is the kind of thing we Christians have to look out for. We have to be on the look out for those ideas being sold to us that tug at our emotions. Ideas that can change our minds about what we believe about Christ.

Here again these words from verse 23," Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful." Christ died once and for all, therefore let us hold on tightly to what it is we believe about Jesus Christ, without changing our minds, because God is constant and true. It sure sounds good, but life gets complicated for all of us, no matter how young or old we are, doesn't it? And there are a lot of competing stories out there, even within Christianity, that play to our emotions and seem to provide answers and solutions to our life's problems- answers and solutions that go far beyond Jesus dying for our sins. And it's tempting to give

some of them a try without much thought. From Christian books filled with spiritual advice for victorious and prosperous living to songs filled with self-centered words, which suggest that we can make it to the next level with God if we just try hard enough, we are bombarded with messages that tell us that we can somehow get more of God's attention so that he will give us the answers we are searching for. But what happens when tragedy or sickness or even death come knocking and life gets complicated once again and life still doesn't make sense? Then we start to question if we bought into something real or just another emotional idea.

The truth is when we are vulnerable, anyone is capable of telling us what we want to hear. When we are struggling to make sense of life, especially when our Christian foundation is shaky at best or when that foundation seems to have not made a difference, changing our minds about Jesus is not that hard to do. One day, the truth that we are baptized children of God, who has given us new life in Christ— not by anything we did but only by what He did to us and continues to do for us, loses its appeal and we seek more. It happens a lot. Perhaps you have people in your life who have changed their minds about what they believe about Jesus. Most of us do. But if you're like me, you also have those people in your life, that no matter what happens, they continue to hold on.

I'm reminded of a young girl whose parents decided they didn't want to remain married so they separated and eventually divorced. The girl was 10 years old when she found herself dividing her time between her mother's house and her father's house. It was hard and she had many questions but she knew about Jesus. You see, her grandparents took her to church every weekend and time and time again she heard about the Savior. Her favorite verse was John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." She really believed that Jesus was just that because he had taken away all of those hurtful sins, including her sins and her parent's sins, by dying on the cross. This girl could have been sold about anything at that point in her life. She could have given up on Jesus in favor of something that made her feel better and took her mind off all the hurt, but deep down she knew what was true. Even though her life was made more difficult by her parent's divorce, she trusted that God was constant and true, even for her and that he would see her through. And even though she didn't understand everything about Christianity, she had faith in Jesus, the Savior of the world, and held on to that faith without ever changing her mind.

That little girl is now grown and has a family of her own. Like all of us, she still has those days that nothing seems to make sense. She still has doubts and still has questions and sometimes she wants more from God in her life to prove he really cares. But when her busy days settle into night and she finally lays her head down and prays, she still believes in what is true. She still might not understand it all but she stays “within the lines” of what has been revealed to her in the Scriptures. She confesses her sins, thanks God for his mercy, and holds on to Jesus and his saving grace.

This is what God wants from us. He wants us to trust Him and hold on to the confession of our great hope, Jesus Christ, without wavering-without changing our minds-because He is faithful and we are what His promises declare us to be. Hold on my friends. **Amen.**