

Resisting Drift, Feeding Our Faith

Hebrews 1:4 - 2:4

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Good Morning, welcome to Christ the King. If we haven't met, my name is Penny, and I'm the senior pastor here, and it's good to be with you. If you're a guest or visitor, welcome. We're glad that you're with us this morning, and I'm glad that you would choose to spend your Sunday here. I know there's a lot of things that you could be doing on Sunday, and a lot of things that you could be giving your attention to, but it's good for us to gather together and to give our attention to Jesus, because we believe that the Bible teaches us that Jesus is the center of our lives, that he is our life, that for all the things that we could give ourselves to, right, to career, to family, to athletics, education, to many, many good things, right, we could give and devote our lives to these sorts of things, but the Bible tells us that Jesus is greater than all those, that he truly is our life, and that's actually what we're seeing in the book of Hebrews, this book that we started looking at last week.

What we're seeing in the book of Hebrews is how Jesus is greater, that he is greater than the prophets, he's greater than Moses, he's greater than the priests, he's greater than anything else that we might encounter in this life, and because of that, we are to give our lives to him. He is our life, right? That's what we saw last week when we began in Hebrews chapter 1 with the first three verses, right, that God had spoken in the past through his prophets, by his prophets, but now he speaks by his son, and his son's word is greater than any other word that we could hear. His voice is stronger and more powerful than the voices of this world, and so we are to listen to him, we are to give ourselves to him, because Christ is our life. Well, this morning we're going to see more of the same. Now the writer of Hebrews, he redirects us, he's not comparing and contrasting Jesus with the prophets, but instead with the angels. So, if you have a Bible, I'd encourage you to turn to Hebrews 1. We're going to look at verses 4 through chapter 2 verse 4. If you don't have a Bible, there are Bibles in the chairs in front of you, and we also project the passage on the screen.

This is what the author of Hebrews writes, beginning in verse 4. He says,

“having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you”?

Or again,

“I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”?

And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,

“Let all God’s angels worship him.”

Of the angels he says,

“He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.”

But of the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

And,

“You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

And to which of the angels has he ever said,

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

Friends, this is the word of the Lord. Let me pray for us.

Heavenly Father, we ask that you would help us to see the greatness of our Lord Jesus, that you would open our eyes and soften our hearts, so that we would behold his glory, that we would see his majesty, that we would see that he is far superior to anything that we could give our lives to, and that we would devote ourselves to following after him. And so we pray that you would help us to do that, even now as we come to your word. Allow the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts to please you, our God and our King, in whose name we pray, amen.

Well, I imagine after this past week of cold and snow and ice, some of us are longing for warmth, right? That is beautiful as it might be, right? That first snow of the year, the quiet of the evening, how it kind of covers the ground like a blanket. As beautiful as that might be, after a day or so of it, many of us start longing for summer. And I imagine maybe some of you, right, after this week, after a couple days of cold weather, of snowy and icy weather, you've started making your spring break plans, right? And you've maybe reserved that hotel for that beach trip this summer, because a bright sun and sand in your toes and warm water, that sounds good on days like today. Even for those of us who don't like the beach, right? I'm not a beach guy, right? The getting everywhere drives me kind of insane. But even if you're not a beach person, right, bright sun and warm water, that sounds really good. And so many of you will go off to the beach this summer.

And when you're at the beach, if you have children, you'll send them out into the ocean. You'll make sure to tell them some things as they're running out there, right? Like, steer clear from jellyfish and watch out for that shark, right? Don't go near... No, you don't say that, because that traumatizes them. That would be kind of funny for a moment. But no, you don't say those sorts of things, right? What you say instead as they go into the ocean, as they go into the water, is you tell them, like, you need to stay kind of in this general vicinity, right? So, every once in a while, I need you to stop playing, I need you to stop splashing, I need you to look up and make sure that you're still in this area, right? And you tell them this, and you encourage them to keep looking and to keep checking, because they will naturally start to drift, right? This is what happens. It happens with little kids, it happens with adults, right? It's not just for little tiny people who are light, it's for, you know, full-grown adults who are maybe a little bit heavier, right? The power of the water, it just causes us to move. And so,

we tell them, keep checking. As you play, as you swim, as you're floating, take a look and come back, right? Because we know that in the midst of playing, in the midst of laughing, in the midst of swimming and splashing, that over time, they will look up and they're like 50 yards down the beach, right? And they have to come back. And what's amazing about this drift that occurs is that when you're in the midst of it, you have no idea it's happening, right? Like, you don't feel it, you're not experiencing it, you think you're in the same place you've always been until you look up and you look at the beach and realize you are way down from where you began. You drifted.

Jesus Is the Unique Son of God

And so, we know this, and so as parents, we tell our kids, we warn them, we encourage them, keep looking up, right? Keep resisting the drift, keep coming back. We try to warn them of this drift. And the author of Hebrews is warning us of drift as well, but this isn't drift that occurs in the middle of the ocean, this is spiritual drift. Did you hear it in chapter 2 verse 1? The author of Hebrews said "we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it." You see, the author understands that as we go about our days, as we go about our week, as a month goes by, as we give ourselves to our work or to our studies, that we can look up and we can see that we have drifted. And so, he says pay much closer attention.

Now, this language of paying much closer attention, it's the language of holding firm or being anchored, right? So, like an anchor of a ship that goes into the water that prevents the ship from drifting in the sea, he's saying we must hold firm. We must pay close attention. And what do we pay attention to? Well, what we've heard. And what we heard right before chapter 2 was that Jesus is greater than the angels. That's how verse 4 of chapter 1 began. "Jesus, having become as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited, is more excellent than theirs." And then in verse 5 and verse 13 of chapter 1, the author is bracketing off this section of Old Testament quotes. And he's doing this to contrast Jesus to the angels. He says, "for to which of the angels did God ever say?" He's showing that God never said these things about the angels.

Now, as I was reading through these verses, I have to tell you, it struck me as very odd how much time the author of Hebrews is spending to tell us that Jesus is greater than the angels. Because honestly, I've never doubted Jesus was greater than the angels. Like, it's never gone through my mind. Like, maybe there's an angel superior to Jesus. I've never thought about once. And in fact, I only really ever think about angels about one time a year, right? Advent and Christmas, when we read, you know, we sing songs like *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* and, you know, all these other, you know, angelic type songs at Christmas. And we read Luke chapter 1 and 2, right? About the angel declaring, you know, the coming of Jesus. Like, the rest of the year, I'm not driving down 419 thinking about the angelic realm. Maybe I'm unique. I don't think I am, right? I imagine that most of you aren't thinking about angels either. And so, it might seem odd to us that the author would talk about this, right? We don't ponder this. We don't think about it.

Maybe, maybe actually this is a deficiency in our theology. You see, maybe this tacitly indicates a skepticism, a tacit skepticism about the spiritual realm that's kind of inherent in us. Maybe. But what I do know is that if we think about angels too little, the receivers of this letter, they seem to be thinking about angels way too much, right? Because they seem to be ascribing some sort of status to the angels. And so, whether we're thinking about angels too

much or too little, the author's point remains, Jesus is greater. He's greater than all things. And because he's greater than all things, even angels were supposed to hold fast to him. And the way that the author seeks to convince us of this is by applying seven Old Testament passages in this verse to Jesus. And when we look at these seven passages, what we see is that Jesus is the unique son of God and that Jesus is the eternal king.

So, he's the unique son of God. Now, if you were with us last week, you know that we talked about this last week as well. So, I'm not going to belabor the point this week. But the author of Hebrews brings it back up again, right? And he does so with these first two quotes in verse 5. In verse 5, he quotes Psalm 2. "You are my son. Today I have begotten you." And then he quotes 2 Samuel 7, "I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son." Now, Psalm 2 is a royal psalm. It's a psalm speaking of the kingship of Israel. And in this, it's clear that there are aspects of the psalm that could be applied to David and his offspring, but that there's other aspects of the psalm that can only be applied to the one greater than David, to Jesus. Like the fact that he is the son of God, begotten, not made, existing from all time. That Jesus comes from the line of David, but he's greater than David. And that's pointed out in 2 Samuel 7 because 2 Samuel 7 is the covenant that God made with David. So, way back in 2 Samuel 7, God came to David through the prophet Nathan and declared to him that there would be one who would come in the line of David, who would reign and rule on David's throne, who would be greater than David.

And so, what the author of Hebrews is doing in using these passages is he's pointing to the uniqueness of Jesus. He is the unique son of God, greater than the angels. Angels for all their glory, for all their incredibleness, right? For all their amazement, right? And they are, right? They are glorious. Like think about when angels appear in the Bible. Right? Whether it's the New Testament or the Old. Oftentimes, what do they have to say as soon as they appear? They have to say, don't fear, right? We think of angels as these little pot-bellied, like tiny little cherub type things, but these are like terrifying beings, right? They show up and they have to say, do not fear. Breathe, relax. I have a good message for you, right? This is what angels have to do because they're so incredible and so glorious that it's fear-inducing. And as incredible and as glorious as an angel is, Hebrews is telling us they are nothing in compared to the glory of Christ. That he's the unique son of God and he's the eternal King. So Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7 are passages that speak of the king, but the author of Hebrews used these two passages to point to Christ's sonship, not his kingship.

Jesus Is the Eternal King

Instead, he uses the other Old Testament verses to make Jesus's kingship more explicit. So we see this in verse 8 when he quotes Psalm 45 and he speaks of Jesus's throne and the scepter of his kingdom. In verse 13, he quotes Psalm 110, how Jesus will reign over his enemies. Now, we're going to talk about that more next week. It's going to show up in our passage, so I'm not going to steal next week's thunder. But verse 6, he goes on and quotes Deuteronomy 32, how the angels worship him. And so in all these ways, the author is pointing to the fact that Jesus is the King who reigns over the world. He reigns over the seen and the unseen, and his reign is eternal. So look at verses 10 through 12. This is Psalm 102. "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain. They will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end." You see what the author of Hebrews is doing in using the psalm? He is contrasting the created order with Jesus. He's contrasting Jesus and creation. And what he's telling us is that Jesus

was in the very beginning. Before the creation existed, Jesus was laying the foundation of the creation.

The heavens and the earth, they are the work of his hands, and they are temporary. I mean, that's remarkable to think about, right? Because in our experience, we have not experienced the world or the universe apart from the world or the universe, right? The world has always been here in my 46 years, and yet there was a time when it wasn't. Right? It's remarkable to think that there was a time when creation didn't exist, when there were no oceans, no mountains, no valleys, right? These things that seem so firm, so unmoving, and yet there was a time when they weren't, and there's a time as they're fading away, right? They're fading away. Creation, we're told, they will wear out like a garment. I think most of you know this, but maybe some of you don't, but the Appalachian Mountains, they're getting smaller. Did y'all know that? Yeah, y'all knew that. Y'all have lived here forever, right? It's clear. You can see them shrink. No, I'm just kidding, right? But they are. They're getting smaller. The mountains are getting smaller because of tectonic inactivity and erosion, and so the mountains are changing. Y'all, that is crazy to think about, isn't it? Like mountains seem so firm. They don't blow in the wind, and yet they are changing. There was a time when creation wasn't, and it is wearing out, and there is a time in the future when Jesus comes again, when it will be renewed, but Jesus, he is eternal. He's eternal. He has no beginning, no end, and though the creation changes and fades, Jesus doesn't. You are the same, and your years have no end. Christ is the eternal King. He's the one we give our attention to. He's the unique son of God, the eternal King, the one we hold fast to. You see, that's what we must do.

Application: We Must Hold Fast

We must hold fast. So what does that look like? Well, this is where having heard all this about Jesus, him being greater than the angels, him being the unique son of God, the eternal king, we return to those first four verses of chapter two, and there the author says we must pay attention. We must hold fast, and I'm using the language of hold fast because in verse two, the author talks about us not neglecting our salvation, and so he's framing up the discussion in the negative, right? If every transgression, disobedience, received just retribution, then we must not neglect our salvation, and so if we're to put it in the active, put it in the positive, we hold fast, right? Instead of neglecting, we hold fast. We pursue. So how do we do that?

Well, before I say what this is, let me say what it's not, because for some of us, we're going to start to think, "well, if I hold fast, then that's why God will love me. That's why God will shower me with blessing," right? "That's why God will be gracious to me if I can hold fast," but we hold fast not for our salvation, but we hold fast because we've been saved, right? We're told that salvation is the gift of the Lord. It's the gift of grace, right? In chapter 2, we're told that it's declared by the Lord. It's confirmed by signs and wonders of God. It's distributed by the Spirit. Salvation is a gift of grace. We hold fast to what we've been given. So what does it look like? Well, it looks like being very intentional about feeding our faith.

So remember, we started with drifting, right? We started our discussion about drifting, and drifting comes from a lack of intentionality, right? You drift because you don't realize you're being blown away, right? You're floating away. That's why you drift. It happens without you realizing it. So let me give you an example from my own life. So a number of years ago, I realized that I wasn't praying very often throughout the course of a day, throughout the course of a week, and so I wanted to remedy this. So what I did was I took out my phone, and you

know, I'm going to encourage you to use your phones. I took out my phone, and I downloaded an alarm app. I want something different than my clock. I want something specific for this purpose. So three times a day, my alarm app goes off, 10:30, 2:00, and 4:00. Three times a day, it goes off. It beeps. My, you know, watch vibrates, and on my phone, it says pray, and so I stop what I'm doing, and I pray, and it was awesome. Like, it worked so well. Apple, thank you for my phone, right? So I would pray, and I found myself praying three times a day, but then the habit started to be formed, and I was praying more often than three times a day. I was praying even when it wasn't going off, when it wasn't vibrating, when it wasn't beeping. I was praying, and I found myself throughout the day just praying, and sometimes it was really short. Like, Lord, give me guidance as I walk into this conversation, and sometimes it was longer, but I found myself praying. It was wonderful.

I was devoting myself to prayer, but then over time, my phone would go off. My watch would vibrate. It would say pray, and I would think, well, I'm kind of in the middle of something right now, and I'll pray, but I need to finish this email, or I'll do it when I send this message. I had every intention to pray, but my intention never materialized, and I looked up, and I had gone days, days without ever praying. Now, I didn't intend for this to happen. It just happened, right? I let the urgent, I let good things, I let the important things, the things that couldn't wait. I gave my attention to those things, and I started drifting. Now, listen, I wasn't drifting in my faith, right? I never questioned God. I never questioned who Jesus was. I never questioned my calling, but I was drifting in my dependence, and I bet you all know what this is like, because it's like the second week of January, and maybe some of you decided, hey, this year, I'm going to read through the Bible, and it's maybe going pretty well, but maybe in the past, it didn't go so well because, you know, March hit, and you look up, and you're like, oh, I can't catch up, right? Or maybe you have intentions to be here every single Sunday, but then one Sunday, you decide to sleep in. Next Sunday, travel day, and you look up, and it's been weeks since you've been in worship. You didn't intend for it to happen, but you just kind of drifted.

The receivers of Hebrews, they neglected their faith. They neglected it because they were focused on angels. I think we neglect it because we focus on the important things, the important things of life, and we end up taking our eyes off Christ, and we drift. So, if we're going to hold fast, what we need to do is intentionally feed our faith. We need to feed our faith. We need to be intentional about it. Some of you are sourdough bread makers, and you know what you have to do, right, with that little bit of starter. If you don't feed it, what happens? It goes bad, and it dies, and it's useless, but if you feed it every single day, you keep it useful and healthy, and you can make beautiful bread. You have to feed it, and the same is true of our faith, and so we feed our faith, and how do we feed it? We feed our faith with worship, the very thing we're doing this. Later in the book of Hebrews, we're going to be told that we're not to neglect meeting together as is the habit of some, but we keep coming back together again, and again, and again, right? We feed our faith through worship, and we feed our faith through prayer, and reading the Bible, and serving, and singing, and doing these disciplines, and maybe some of you are thinking, like, really? That's it? That's all we're supposed to do? I mean, there's no, like, new book out there, right? We're not going to have, like, a conference on feeding your faith, and then we're going to be great, right? It's just prayer, and Bible reading, and worship, and the answer is yes.

We feed our faith with the very means of grace that has been true, and have been given to us for millennia. It's simple, and it is life-changing, so maybe you're sitting there, and you realize I've neglected my faith, and so I'll start worrying about, I'll start praying, I'll start

reading, I'll commit myself to worship, you know, when I'm really kind of motivated, and when I really feel like it, but don't wait for that, because that may not come. No, if you're sitting there, and you're realizing I've neglected these aspects of my faith, then I would encourage you confess it, acknowledge it, and sing today, and read your Bible tomorrow, and pray, and give yourself to those things, right? Just start feeding yourself again. Start feeding yourself again. You're here now. That's feeding your faith, and tomorrow you can read, and pray, and sing, and you can devote yourself to feeding on the message that we've heard, right? The message that the one greater than the angels, the unique son of God, the eternal king, he has provided a salvation for us, a salvation that no one else can give, and so we hold fast, and we feed our faith out of love for what God has done in Jesus. That's what we do. We return to the Lord. We turn our eyes back to him. We read his word. We pray in his name. We sing glory and praise to him, because he is the one who has saved us. It's out of love that we feed our faith, out of love for Christ, the one greater than the angels. Amen.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we do thank you that you have revealed to us who Jesus is, and that you have sent your son to live, and to die, and to rise again, so that we would have life, and so we pray, Father, that you would help us to beat back the distractions that so easily encroach upon our lives, that we would devote ourselves to following after you, to giving ourselves, to reading your word, to praying in your name, to singing your glories, that we would do these things because you're deserving of it, but we would do it also because it is for our good, and so we pray, Father, feed us. Feed us and equip us so that we would feed upon your word, and upon this message of salvation, and we pray that you would help us to do this, and we pray this in the name of Christ, and all God's people said together, Amen.