

Anchored

Hebrews 6:13-20

Rev. John Pennylegion

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Well, good morning. 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 are a guest or a visitor, welcome. We're glad that you would join us this morning, and you're joining us in the midst of a sermon series in the book of Hebrews, and so we are going to be looking at the end of Hebrews 6 this morning. So if you have a Bible, you can turn to Hebrews 6. If you don't have a Bible, there are Bibles in the chairs, as well as we project the passage on the screens. You can follow along there. But as you're turning there, let me remind you what's been going on in the book of Hebrews. So remember, the author of this book is unknown. We're not sure who he or she may have been.

We're not told who the author is. And also, we actually don't know a ton about the recipients, but what we do know about them is that they were these people who had come to faith, who had professed faith in Jesus, who were worshiping him as Lord and Savior, and yet difficulties arose in their life, right? That there's pain, and there's strife, and there's difficulty, and even persecution, and because they're experiencing these things, they're contemplating and they're wondering if they should return to their old way of life. Should they return to the sacrificial system that they had adhered to? Should they return to their old traditions? And of course, the answer that the author of Hebrews has been giving time and again is no. No, that instead of returning to their old manner of life, they're to hold fast to Jesus. They are to cling to him, that they are to be anchored to Christ, because Christ is better. He's better than the old way of life, right? He's better than the prophets, and he's greater than Moses, and he's superior to the priests, and he's higher than the angels.

And so they are to hold fast to Christ. They're to be anchored to him. And so that's what the author of Hebrews has been encouraging them to do again and again and again. And if you remember at the end of last week's passage, he said one way that we continue to hold fast, one way that we learn what faith looks like, is to look at those who have gone before us and to imitate their faith. And this morning, what the author of Hebrews is doing is he's highlighting a particular person in the history of the church. He's going to highlight a particular event in the life of Abraham. And in doing this, not only will we see Abraham's faith, but most importantly, we'll see the Lord's faithfulness to Abraham. And not just to Abraham, but to his church. So with that in mind, let's read Hebrews chapter 6, beginning in verse 13.

“For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, ‘Surely I will bless you and multiply you.’ And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” (ESV)

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

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, and we ask now that you would meet with us, that you would guide us. God, we need your help so that we would understand it. We need your help so that we would see what you have for us. And so we ask for your help. Holy Spirit, open our eyes, soften our hearts, unplug our ears, that we would behold the beauty of your word. And we pray all this in Christ's name. Amen.

So a number of years ago, my family and I went out to Explore Park, and we did the Tree Top Quest. Have some of y'all done this? Y'all are familiar with Tree Top Quest, right? It's a ropes course and zip lines, right? And we went out shortly after it opened. I know that our youth group has gone out, right? It's kind of a fun thing to do, especially with kids, but it's fun for adults as well, right? And we climb up into the trees, and you're up there 50, 60 feet high in the air in zip lines that are 160 feet plus in length, and you get going 25 miles per hour. And while you're doing this, right before you go up, they make sure that you know what you're doing, right? Because it could be dangerous, right? There's no net below you, right? And so they make sure that you know how to clip yourself in and your harness is on properly, right? And they assure you, like, don't worry, right? Don't worry. You follow our instructions. You wear your harness. You clip yourself. You have nothing to fear. And so you climb up, and you're standing there 50 feet in the air, and you look over the edge, right? And you know, it's not the most harrowing of heights, right? There are zip lines that are far longer, far high, you know, much higher, far faster than this one at Treetop Quest. But still, when you're up there 50 feet in the air, and you're only being clipped to this line, and there's no net underneath you, you know, it can make you feel a little insecure, a little unsure, right?

But they promise you, you have nothing to worry about. Do not fear. Don't worry. Don't panic because you're in your harness. You're tethered to the line. You're anchored by the clip. You are perfectly safe. They assure you of this. And yet, they still make you sign a waiver. But, you know, we were safe, you know? We didn't have to invoke the waiver, thankfully, right? We were completely safe. We zoomed along the zip lines, and we climbed up into the trees, and we had no accident, no problem, right? We were completely safe. But I have to tell you, that even though they assured us we would be, and even after the first time we went along, every once in a while, I would still get this feeling, like, is it really going to hold, right? Like, they swear, they promise that they've tightened all the bolts, and that everything is the way it should be, but you know that waiver still, right? Is it really going to hold? Am I really going to be fine, right? Doubts start to enter our mind. Even when the line has proven to be sure, even when the anchor is held firm, right, we still can start to wonder, like, maybe this time it won't. Doubts start to enter.

God's Promises

And, you know, we can have doubts about the Lord, too, right? Because we hear things about Him. We hear things about His promises, His assurances for us, that He'll always be with us, that He'll never leave us nor forsake us, that He holds us in the palm of His hand, right? That He will hold us fast, right? We sang of that, and we see those, hear those things, and we have this assurance from God, but then there are times in our lives when it feels like we are hanging, and there is no net below us, and it feels like we're hanging on for dear life, and that we might let go, and we wonder, we wonder, are His promises really true? He has promised

that He will be sure, that He is, we are anchored to Him, and the anchor will not let go. He has promised these things, but we can wonder, maybe not this time.

And that's where Hebrews is actually really helpful for us, because in verse 19, the author of Hebrews says, "we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope." And that sounds wonderful, doesn't it? I mean, when we're hanging on for dear life, right, when there is no net below us, to hear there is an anchor of the soul, something that is immovable, that is held fast, and yet we still wonder, is this really true? And so, what the author of Hebrews is going to do this morning, is he's going to show us why it's true. And he's going to help us to assure us of the steadfastness, of the sure hope of God. And the way he's going to do this is by pointing to God's promise, and to God's faithfulness to His promise. So, the promise that he begins with is the promise that God made to Abraham, right? That's what we hear. God said to Abraham, "surely I will bless you and multiply you."

And this is a direct quote from Genesis 22, right? It was the passage that was read, that Evan read for us earlier. And you remember Genesis 22, right? The setting of this. This is where God tested Abraham to see if Abraham was going to believe him, was going to be faithful to God. And he did so by calling Abraham to take Isaac, his only son, and offer him as a sacrifice. And so, up the mountain they went, just the two of them. And Abraham lays out his son. And before he is to sacrifice him, God stops him, right? Y'all remember this. God stops him. And instead of offering up his son, God provided a ram. And so, the ram was sacrificed. And after this occurred, God reminds him. He reminds him, surely I will bless you and multiply you. He's reverting back to a promise that God made to Abraham long before Isaac was ever born. Abraham will be blessed. Many will come from his line that he would multiply.

And God gave that promise to Abraham, right? That his children would outnumber the sand on the seashore. Now, when Abraham and Sarah were given this promise, do you remember? They were advanced in age, right? Long beyond the age of being able to have children. And so, when they first heard this promise, it would have been easy for them to doubt, right? For them to question God. In fact, Abraham asked, how can this be? And Sarah, do you remember? Sarah laughed. She laughed because it seemed far-fetched and impossible that they would have a child. And so, to assure them of his promise, God swore an oath to them. Look at verse 13, "When God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself." And then in verses 16 through 17. "So, when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise, the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath." Now listen, we take oaths and we make vows and we do so in the name of someone or something greater than ourselves in order to show that we will keep our oath, right? To keep our promise. So, we do it for the sake of those who hear it, right? And so, we say things like, I promise on my grandmother's grave, right? Or I promise on the souls of my children. Or we put our hand on a Bible in a court of law and promise to tell the truth. Or kids, you pinky swear, right? Right? I mean, kids, like, is there anything more sacred in your childhood than the pinky swear, right? Like, do you still do that, kids? Pinky swear? Okay. Some of you do. Very good. Great. Wonderful. Yeah. I thought that was just my childhood. But, right, we do these sorts of things, right? And we invoke something greater than ourselves to assure others that we'll keep our word.

But when God took an oath and he made a vow, there was no one greater than himself, right? That's what the author of Hebrews said. There was no one greater than God. And so, God had to make an oath. He had to swear an oath by invoking himself. Now, as an aside, God's word

should be enough for us to believe. Like, God shouldn't need to make oaths or vows to us. His word should be sufficient for us to believe him. And yet he swore an oath not because he's not trustworthy. He swore an oath because we have trouble believing. Christos, one of the early church fathers, he said it this way. He said, "since humanity is hard of belief, God condescends to communicate on our level. So then for our sake he swears, even though it be unworthy of him that he should not be believed. It's for our lack of belief that God swears an oath by invoking his own name and his own character." And that's what God did with Abraham, right? And he did this in Genesis 15. So, in Genesis 15, God made a covenant with Abraham, right? And he said to Abraham, take the heifer, take the ram, take the bull, take the turtle dove, take the pigeon, take them all and cut them in half and lay them out before you. And this was the ceremony that took place when people entered into covenant with one another. And so, if you and I were entering into a covenant, we would do this. We would take the animals, we'd cut them in half, and then the two of us would walk through the carcass together. And when we would walk through, we were basically saying, if one of us breaks the agreement, breaks the covenant, let that person be like these animals.

So, Abraham understood what was going on here, okay? God is condescending. He's revealing to Abraham, he's speaking to Abraham in a way that he would understand. But what's unique about Genesis 15 is that Abraham didn't walk through the center with God. Abraham was standing outside. He set it all up and he stood on the outside and he watched God walk down the center. And he did so, God walked down by himself. He walked through those animals because it was his way of saying, this promise I'm making to you, Abraham, you can be assured I will keep it. It's not on you to keep it, I'm going to keep it. He was swearing by his own character. He was making a vow by his own name. He was guaranteeing that the promise was sure. Now, why would the author of Hebrews use this story from thousands of years prior to the Hebrews ever being written? Like, why would he invoke this? To encourage them towards steadfastness, to hold to the anchor of their soul, to hold fast to their hope. Why would they do, why would he do this? Well, because God's promise is shown to be faithful. That's why.

God's Faithfulness

God's promise is shown to be faithful. That even the promise he made to Abraham, God was faithful in bringing it about, right? I mean, think about how long Abraham had to wait for Isaac to be born. So, Abraham was promised that he would have a son, right? That the nations would be blessed through him when Abraham was roughly about 75 years old. And then Isaac was born 25 years later. Okay, so think about that now, y'all. Okay, Abraham, every single year, wouldn't he be starting to wonder, like, is this going to hurry up and happen? Because I'm not getting any younger, right? Like, how many more years do I have left? And you have promised, right? Wouldn't it have been easy for Abraham to start to wonder, will this come about? When will this come about? And yet we're told in verse 15 of our passage that he patiently waited to obtain the promise. He patiently waited. He trusted in God's word. And God was faithful. Isaac was born. But that was only part of the promise, right? Because the other part of the promise was that through Abraham, the nations would be blessed, that his line would multiply. And again, Abraham was patient.

But what's interesting is that though Abraham was patient, he never actually saw the fulfillment of that part of the promise. He saw Isaac, but he never saw the people of God go into Egypt. He never saw the people of God spread beyond the Middle East, right? He never saw that. And though Abraham never saw it, God was still faithful. Though Abraham died

before that part of the promise was fulfilled, God was still faithful. He never wavered. He didn't fail. He hadn't forgotten the promise he made. Look at verse 17. "When God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise, the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath." Now, I want you to look closely at that verse, and I want you to pay attention to what we just heard. Because what the author is doing is he started with Abraham. He started with the promise made to him. But now, look, in verse 17, he is broadening his focus to the heirs of the promise. The heirs of the promise. The spiritual descendants of Abraham. And you know who that is? It's the author of Hebrews. And it's the recipient of Hebrews. And it's us. Y'all, we are the heirs of the promise. Because the promise was that the nations would be blessed. That God's word would spread throughout all the world. And though Abraham never saw that fulfilled, God was faithful to bring that promise to completion. To bring it to bear. Right?

We're told that there are two unchangeable things. That's what the author of Hebrews says. There are two unchangeable things. And most theologians think what he's referring to is God's promise and his oath that confirms his promise. There are two unchangeable things. His promise and his oath. And God does not lie. He is faithful. And so, I want you to think about that. Think about the heirs of the promise. The fact that we, those who are not ethnically descended from Abraham, but we who are spiritually related to him, who are called by God, who know his grace, who trust in him. I mean, just think about the fact that we are worshiping here. The God of Abraham. We are worshiping the God of Abraham in Roanoke, Virginia in 2025. And that reflects God's faithfulness to his promise. I mean, y'all, that is amazing to think about. I mean, we just kind of take it for granted, right? We just show up on a Sunday morning. I mean, Abraham could not have comprehended us worshiping the Lord. And yet, God is faithful to his promise. It is remarkable. It is amazing that the existence of the church and the inclusion of us into the family of God, that that shows his faithfulness to his promise he made all the way back to Abraham.

And y'all, if that weren't enough, we're told he's faithful so that in verses 18 through 20, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. For we have a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf. So you see what this is? Because God has been faithful, we hold fast to our hope because our hope has entered the holy place of God, right? That's what he says, behind the curtain. That is a clear allusion to the holy of holies, right? That part of the tabernacle of the temple where God dwelt amongst his people, the place of God's presence, the most holy place, that is where the object of our hope, Jesus, has gone. He's gone behind the curtain and he is the forerunner on our behalf. You see that word forerunner? This is the only time in the New Testament it's used. But in the Greek world, it was used in a couple different contexts. One was in athletic competition and the other was in a military context. And so in an athletic competition, this Greek word would be used to speak of those who run out ahead, right? Who take the lead, who win the race. And in a military context, it was speaking of those advancing soldiers on the front line, moving forward. And so when we hear this being applied to Jesus, it'd be easy for us to think, like, oh, well, Jesus is the forerunner. Like he's out in front and he's running, right? And he's just taking off and he's sprinting as fast as he can. And he's looking behind and he's like, catch up, y'all, right? Don't lag, keep coming, right?

That's how we could think about. But that's not how it's really being used. The way it's being used is that Jesus is a forerunner. He is a precursor for all those who would follow him. That he's gone where we will one day go as well. He's gone into the very presence of God, into the

place of God's dwelling. And we go there too because we are tethered to Christ. Because we are anchored to him. He is our sure and steadfast anchor. We approach God only through Christ. And he has gone before us. He is the forerunner who has gone into the presence of God so that we would as well. And so do you see how this would actually be a great encouragement to the first hearers of Hebrews? To the recipients of this letter? I mean, do you see how this would encourage them as they were experiencing trials and struggles? And they're wondering if God's promises are true. But as they're wondering, are God's promises true? Will he really hold us fast? They're reminded of how Abraham patiently waited. They're reminded of God's confirming oath. They're reminded of his faithfulness demonstrated through Jesus. And they're encouraged to hold fast to Christ. He is the anchor of their souls, the object of their hope.

You see how that encourages them, but do you see how it encourages us? I mean, think about that image of an anchor, right? When waves are pounding a boat, when the winds are picking up, right? If that anchor is down, if the anchor is down, the boat will not move. It won't drift. It's immovable, right? It's firm. It's steadfast. N.T. Wright put it this way, "we are not promised that there won't be any storms. Indeed, the provision of a secure anchor implies there will be. What we are promised is that we will be kept safe." And that's what the author of Hebrews is encouraging us with. He's encouraging us to hold firm, to wait patiently on the Lord, to hold sure to our anchor and immovable hope, the promises of God, his faithfulness, his Son who goes before us. That is our hope. That is the one that we are anchored to, and he is the one that we hold fast to. Amen. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we do thank you that you have given your Son, our Lord Jesus, so that in the midst of trial, in the midst of difficulty, when waters are raging, when winds are blowing, when we are hanging on for dear life and there's no net below us, you hold us fast. And so we pray that in those times that we would hold fast to you, that we would hold fast to the anchor of our souls to our only hope, our Lord Jesus, the one who has gone before us into your very presence. And so we ask, Father, help us. Help us to fix our eyes on Christ. Help us to hold fast to him. Help us to rest and put our hope in Jesus. And we pray all this in his name and God's people said together, Amen.