

DEVOTION HEBREWS 4: 14-16

We've listened to Duane, Linda, and Twila tell us three stories of times when God's grace was very important to them. It's encouraging to our faith to hear their stories of grace, because we all need grace in our own times of need.

The words from Hebrews 4 were written to encourage us to approach God for the grace and help we need in times of need. The writer of Hebrews wrote to Jewish Christians and declares Jesus Christ as our great high priest. They understood that in Old Testament Jewish faith, God had designated men to serve as priests to teach the faith, counsel, and perform religious rituals. Kind of like a pastor today. One man was set aside as the high priest, the ultimate authority. Only the high priest could enter the area of the temple called the Holy of Holies, and once a year on the Day of Atonement, would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat for the sins of the people. Hebrews 4 says that Jesus is our great high priest, who sprinkled his own blood for sins, rose from the grave, and returned to heaven.

Because we have such a high priest in Jesus, hold firm to our confession. What confession is that? We've heard it twice this year as people joined the church: If we confess with our lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in our hearts God raised him from the dead, we are saved. In the difficult times of life, when you see no solution in sight, when you're tired of waiting for an answer to prayer, when you've done your best to fight a temptation and gave into it again, when someone comes along with another kind of faith that sounds interesting but has no risen Jesus as Lord, hold on to your confession- don't let go.

I love the next part about having confidence. I don't know about you, but when I need to meet with someone in power, like a boss, I get nervous. I hope I don't say something stupid, or stutter; I worry that I will have failed at something or forgotten it and I'll be taken to task. And if I know I haven't completed an assignment I was given, I assume the worst. I rarely assume that it will be an uplifting experience. But Hebrews tells us to come boldly with confidence before God at the throne of grace, it's not a throne of condemnation or picking over our shortcomings and failures. We're invited to come with confidence, unafraid. That's amazing grace.

Why can we come with confidence? Because Jesus, our high priest, knows what it's like to be human, to be tempted to take the easier path, the less costly path, the path that makes us feel good in the moment or to feel in control, but a path that doesn't honor Christ. Christ was tempted like us and knows how hard it can be to live faithfully and he is filled with compassion. So we can come with confidence to find mercy when we've failed and find help in times of need. The mercy and help Duane, Linda, and Twila found is the grace available to all of us. Amazing grace that never runs out. Grace that was precious the hour we first believed. Grace that has brought us safe through many dangers, toils and snares, grace that we'll sing about for 10 million years and we'll have only just begun. Amazing Grace.

So God invites us to hold firm to Jesus our risen Lord, and to come to the throne of grace in prayer with confidence, with big buckets, praying big prayers, because we belong to a big God. We can bring our big buckets as we pray for ourselves and those we love, for our nation and our world, and you are invited to bring big buckets as you pray for this church in your search for a pastor, as you pray for the ability to trust God for the future of this church.

It's time for big prayers, confident prayers, and big buckets to receive what God has to give, all because of God's big amazing grace.