

MESSAGE – Therefore....
October 31, 2021
Rev. Lisa Kruse-Safford

The word therefore in Scripture always gets my attention.
It signifies – here’s what it means for you.

We’ve been reading in the book of Hebrews these past few weeks and hearing the urgency of the Gospel to people who were considering turning away; hearing the compelling reasons for Christ.

Today we get a powerful “therefore” for those readers. And perhaps a powerful “therefore” for us.

Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us **draw near to God** with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us **hold unswervingly** to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may **spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another**—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

~~~~~

The writer poses three therefore’s for them.

Therefore, Draw Near

Remember when the restrictions started being lowered for you?

I remember the first time I was allowed to light the fire in the fireplace. It had a gas starter that you would have to put a match to.....it was now permissible for me.

What changed? I had grown up. I had learned how to properly light the fire.

For the Jews – there was always this understanding of the separation between them and God.

Don't touch

Don't presume to come near.

Don't desecrate; don't profane the holy for you are unholy and unclean.

There was even a great curtain that provided the separation.....

But now they are being told to "draw near". They *can* draw near. The relationship with God is changed....the restriction has been lowered. What has changed?

Jesus is the change. Through him, through his sacrifice, a new way has been opened to God. And quite literally, that point was made by God for when Jesus died on the cross one of the things that happened is that the curtain that separated people from approaching God was torn in two. From top to bottom.

It was God's doing.

It wasn't torn from the bottom up....that's the way we could tear the curtain.

God has made a new way and we can now draw near.

this means we can fully confess.....not hold back any of our deep down ugliness for some folks, they stay away from a relationship with God because they feel their sins are too great.....God wouldn't understand...God couldn't forgive. So I'll just stay away and hide.

for we've been washed of it and we can come near to God.

The prophecy in Isaiah has been fulfilled: "Though our stains are scarlet, they've been washed whiter than snow....."

Are you holding back? The good news is: you don't have to.

### Therefore: Hold Fast

Things become obsolete very quickly these days....in my home I know there is an old ipad, an old phone. I think about how quickly communication has changed; we quickly let go of My Space when Facebook became popular. Facebook was let go of in favor of snapchat and now there's TikTok ....

Even in church....books keep coming out about how to do relevant ministry to people of today....older methods are quickly let go of in favor of new strategies and techniques to engage people....

And it applies to the faith as well. For some, there's a "been there, done that" response to the faith. For others, it's "I can't be a part of something that has such imperfect people in it and running it". And still for others, its: "I can't believe in a good God when there's such evil and brokenness in the world". And faith is the baby that's thrown out with the bath water.

In such a fast-paced quickly changing environment, do we even know how to hold unswervingly to something? Yet this is what the author says, "hold unswervingly to the hope you profess"

#### Therefore: Spur on

I remember a time in seminary when I became disillusioned...

Geoffrey was there, sitting with me and he spurred me on....

He said, "yes, but as imperfect as it is, it is what we have. The Gospel is the greatest hope on earth."

I'm forever grateful for that

What he did for me on that curbside conversation is exactly what those early Christians needed from each other. Some people were falling away; ghosting the gatherings. And they needed someone to come alongside them and encourage them in their faltering faith.

And there are so many people who need that from us.

Encouragement in the faith.

Something to counteract discouragement....for what we give energy to is what grows....

Encouragement that their presence in the body matters.

I don't need church....but church needs you

Unfortunately we approach church in much the same way we approach restaurants and stores and products nowadays. "I'm not interested in that anymore". "I don't like that store any more."

But that's not what church is supposed to be.

Yes we do gather to receive something from God.

But we also gather to give something to God.

And yes we gather to be encouraged.

But we also gather to give encouragement to others.

Yes we gather to be served.

But we also gather in order to serve and be a blessing.

I look around and I don't see some people who I used to see.

How about you? What can we do? How can we encourage?

The writer of long ago is calling to us down through the years in the midst of our troubled times saying:

Draw near....

Let's pray:

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden, we draw near to you - for you love us, despite our failures. We bow our hearts and minds in humility, trusting in your forgiveness, leaning on your promise of welcome in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

And the writer is saying:

Hold tight....so let us profess our faith with this affirmation

*Leader: There is one God and there is one mediator, Christ Jesus, who came as a ransom for all, to whom we testify.*

**Congregation:**

**This saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance: That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory. Great indeed is the mystery of the gospel. Amen.**

And the writer is saying:

Encourage one another....

So let me end with this note: I know faith is hard at times. I know church can be frustrating. But let's keep moving forward with it....for Jesus is worth it all!