

“Personally Preparing for Easter”
Hebrews 10:19-25
Stephen King

Our scripture tonight comes from Hebrews 10:18-25. Let's stand for the reading of God's Word.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh. And since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. For he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Holy father, we praise and thank you for this word that you have given us. We thank you for how it encourages us. We thank you that it focuses on Christ. And may we be blessed this evening and apply it as we seek to prepare for Easter. We ask all this in your holy name. Amen.

You may be seated.

I've been asked to give a short meditation on how do we personally prepare for Easter. We call this week Holy Week, and I love that term. I think it's very fitting because we think about the term holy. We mean to set apart. And that is exactly what we as a church are trying to encourage you to do.

This week is to set this week apart that we may focus on the ministry of Christ, particularly the ministry of Christ and the crucifixion and the resurrection. That's why I love this passage. As we're thinking about how do we prepare for Easter? Because it starts with what takes place during Easter. We're given two motivators, two motivations and three action steps for us to apply.

That can be principles for how do we apply this week to prepare well for Easter? And there's two motivations that he begins with. He says that we have access to God because of the cross of Christ, that we get the highest privilege that any human being could ever have is a relationship with their creator, particularly in light of the fact that we are sinners and he is holy and we have access to this holy God, the one who made us because of the cross of Christ.

That's motivation. Number one. And the motivation number two is that we have hope. We have hope because of the ongoing ministry of Jesus as our high priest. See, in Easter, we don't

celebrate a dead Savior. Jesus didn't come and live the life that we were called to live and then die. The death that only he could die, the atoning death.

And it was dead and buried and that's it. Now on Easter, we celebrate a risen Savior, one who rose from the grave and that lives eternally as our great and perfect high priest, who forever intercedes on our behalf and ministers to us at the right hand of God. That's how he begins. That is Easter. We celebrate the ministry of Jesus, the crucifixion of Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus that points to the ongoing work of the High Priest.

Now this leads to the question is how do we prepare? How do we set this week apart so that we may be spiritually blessed, so that we may grow in our relationship with God, and so that we can be effective witnesses out in a sin curse world. And he gives us these three action steps, and he begins by saying, spend time with God.

Spend time with God. He says this in verse 22. He says, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. He's saying, we have this great privilege to spend time with our creator because of the work of Jesus. Therefore, go and do it.

Draw near to him with confidence, with assurance, knowing that he loves you and he desires to spend time with you. And so we ought to take some time this week to carve out of our schedules to set this week aside so that we can focus on spending time with the God who loves us, who died for us, who made a way for us that we may be spiritually blessed.

See, I love Christmas and Easter because these are seasons that are natural in the Christian life that we can pull away from the regular rhythms and routines of our world and the pressures of our world, and say, we want to focus on an aspect of the ministry of Jesus and Christmas. We focus on the incarnation and the Easter.

We focus on the crucifixion and the resurrection. These are good seasons to pull away and saying, God, I want to draw near to you. Meet with me in a special way. And there's one particular spiritual discipline that I would encourage you to utilize this week. It's something that the Bible talks about a lot, but we as Western Christians don't often apply, and that's fasting.

The Bible talks a lot about prayer and fasting and fasting. We withhold food or something else so that we may draw closer to God, may grow in our faith, or maybe even seek wisdom for particular decision and see when we fast. This week we're reminded of the sufferings of Christ. And if there's one day I would encourage you to fast, it would be Good Friday, because we think about what happens on Good Friday.

Jesus voluntarily enters into suffering so that we can have a relationship with him, so our sins could be paid for. And so as we fast and particularly fast on Good Friday, when we feel the

hunger pains, we feel the desire for the very thing that we want. We were reminded of the sufferings of Christ that he endured because he wanted us and lets us are a spot reminder to pray and to give thanks.

So how do we prepare for Easter? First, spend time with God. Carve out time in your schedule. Number two. Examine your heart. Examine your heart. Look at verse 23. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. For he who promised is faithful. He says, hold fast to the confession of our hope. What is the confession of our hope?

It's the gospel. We confess that Jesus is our only hope for salvation. He is our only way. There is no hope in anyone else or anywhere else we hold fast. But he says to do it without wavering. Why? Because our hearts are tempted to drift away from God and drift away from the gospel. Our hearts as we sing.

And that hymn, Come Thou Fount, are prone to wonder. We don't drift towards God. We drift away from God. And there are two areas where we particularly drift away from the gospel. The first is that we fail to see the necessity of the cross. We fail to see the necessity of the cross. See, the cross is necessary because of our sin, because sin separates us from God.

Sin causes death in our own world, in our own souls and our own bodies. It brings destruction. Therefore, those that are in Christ, we ought to hate sin. Like the Lord hates sin, because we're united to him and we're united to his holiness. We ought to seek holiness in our own lives, and so we ought to slow down this week and examine our heart and say, God, where am I not seeing the necessity of the cross in my life?

What areas of my life that I am taking advantage of? Your grace? Where do I need to focus on walking in holiness and repentance? Turn my eyes off the things of this world and put my gaze back on Jesus. That's one area in which we waiver from the gospel in other way. When we waiver from the gospel, is that we fail to see the sufficiency of the cross.

That in the cross Jesus says, there is therefore now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus, who is to bring the charge against my elect. See, when we fail to see the sufficiency of the cross, that our sins are forgiven, that we have access to God, that we have favor with God, that we are loved wholly and chosen by God.

We tend to beat ourselves up. We tend to add weights to our soul. We tend to lose the joy of our salvation, and we tend not to live as free as gospel ambassadors in this world. And so we ought to slow down and ask this week, as we examine our hearts. God, where am I failing to see the sufficiency of the cross in your grace in my life?

Where am I seeing my sin greater than the cross? And so we examine our hearts. So we draw near to God. We examine our hearts. And then verse 24, we bless others and let us consider

how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as the habit of some, but encouraging one another all the more as you see the day drawing near.

As we look forward to the second coming of Christ, we ought to consider. We have to think about. We have to meditate. We ought to plan. How can we bless others? Other versions of this text say, how do we provoke one another to love and good works? I like that term to provoke. We often use that term to elicit a negative response.

We're talking about listening a negative response or a negative action. I have two young boys. They tend to provoke one another and not in the good way. You may have similar kids at your house where they provoke one another or they irritate. They frustrate one another and they act out of anger and frustration or right cross to the stomach.

It's provoking, but the Bible calls us to provoke one another to good, to love, to focus our gaze back on Jesus. And so this week, we ought to spend some time planning, thinking, meditating on how can we be a blessing to others? How can we stir up love and good works in the people around us? Who can we provoke to love Jesus a deeper?

There may be somebody in your life that's over here. And there's pitfall number two, where they're failing to see the sufficiency of the cross that you could come along side of them. Love them. Encourage them and give a gospel word. Maybe it's your spouse. Maybe it's your children. Maybe it's your neighbor. Maybe it's your coworker. Spend some time asking, Lord, who is it that you want me to bless this week to care for?

Why? Because we have been blessed. I suppose Easter is all about. God sent his own son to bless us and recipients of grace. When they're marked by grace, they're givers of grace. They want to bless others as they have been blessed. And then we ought to consider and think about who is the Lord laid in our life, that we can provoke to putting their faith in Christ, which is the ultimate good.

The ultimate act of love is for them to lay down their rebellion and turn to Christ as their only hope of salvation. You know, we're offering this book. We're talking about it in our bookstore that you could pick up. Says is Easter believable? Maybe pray about who is one person in your life that you can hand this book to, and you can say things in?

This book really changed my life. It matters to me. Would you mind reading it and let's go grab coffee or lunch? I'd love to hear what you have to say about it. Or maybe you invite them to one of our services. Well, it's Monday, Thursday, our Good Friday service, our Easter Sunday Easter has shown historically. To bring in people who don't normally go to church.

They're more likely to attend one of these services than they are any other time of the year, because it's somewhat cultural to do so and say, I would love for you to learn about the Savior

that I live for, that I love that has changed my life. Would you mind attending one of these services? I'd love to hear what you think and then pray.

So in summary, as I conclude, how do we prepare well for Easter? What does this look like? How do we set it aside as holy and unto the Lord we draw near to God. We examine our hearts where we're wavering away from the gospel. We turn our eyes back to Jesus, and then we ask the Lord God, where do you want to use me?

Who do you want for me to provoke to love and the good works? How can I bless others the way you have blessed me with Jesus, who live for me, who died for me? Who lives eternally interceding and ministering on my behalf.

Let's pray.

Lord, we praise and thank you for this evening. We praise and thank you for this scripture that teaches us so much about your gospel, that teaches us about the ongoing work of Jesus that calls us and tells us how to prepare well for this day, where we look forward to and celebrate our risen Savior. May you bless us as we seek you. We ask all this in your name.

Amen.