

"APPROACHING THE THRONE"

Hebrews 4:14-16

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(ILLUSTRATION)

In a recent issue of Time Magazine an article appeared called "The Evolution of Despair."

In this article, Robert White, the author, begins this piece by quoting the now infamous and notorious annabomber. In the words of the annabomber he says, "I attribute the social and psychological problems of modern society to the fact that society demands of humans conditions that are radically different from those conditions under which the human race has evolved."

Now while we deplore the annabomber as far as his terrorist activities are concerned, we have to be aware of the fact that if you read some of his writings he seems to put his finger on the pulse of the American dilemma. Because for a fact we were not created in this stress box that we call "American society."

What we have to understand -- that VCRs and Microwaves and Computers have their virtue but in all the gadgetry we have developed, we have manufactured for ourselves a society of despair.

I think it is significant to note that the rate of depression has doubled every ten years for the past fifty years. It is deplorable to understand that the third leading cause of death among young adults in America today is suicide. It is topped only by car accidents and homicides.

It is tragic to understand that a third of Americans - 33% nearly - find themselves suffering from chronic panic and anxiety

attacks on numerous occasions. It is as though we have developed for ourselves a treacherous and a valance society that is alienated and isolated and disconnected.

When the authorities talk about this kind of a society they pinpoint several reasons why people are so stratified today. One of the reasons is because that 25% of American households is comprised by a single person. In 1940 there were only 8%; at the "turn of the century" there was only 0% practically. And because of that isolation of individuals living as individuals we have lost the concept of community and neighborhood and oneness with other people.

It is interesting that some of the noted psychiatrist - Robert Putnam to be exact, who is a noted social psychologist for Harvard University has said one of the reasons for alienation is because of television -- particularly when you link it up with VCRs and coaxial cable. And particularly when you understand that the average American adult watches television twenty-eight hours per week. There is not much social bonding or interaction that goes on in a home between people.

The result of all of that is we find ourselves with a rash of narcissism or selfishness. We are beset by wife battering and child abuse, drug addiction, and a plethora of sexual aberrations that we talk about in terms of alternative lifestyles.

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We all know the problem but we come to ourselves asking the question, "What is the answer?" We have every self-help technique that you could possibly imagine. We have every written resource that could be available to man. We have the latest research about human behavior and how that we can better our situation. We have everything at our finger tips to develop a real Camelot, a Shangralla, almost like a heaven on earth and to really produce the truest sense of the American dream. But yet we are losing it and a society falters.

The truth of the matter is the reason for our problem is because we find our society is alienated from God. It has lost its anchor. It has lost its foundation. and it looks for its answers in all of the wrong places. There is only one answer to the human dilemma today and that is the revelation of the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the book that is called the living word of the living God, the living life in a living day.

What is the answer to our dilemma? What is the truth? It is in the Word. What is good? It is in the Word. What is evil? It is in the Word. What is law? It is in the Word. What is order? It is in the Word. What is significance and meaning and purpose and peace and happiness? It is in the Word.

Because man was created to praise God, when mankind does not praise God he becomes alienated and disconnected from himself. And when he becomes disconnected from himself he doesn't know where to turn. But the revival that God wants is a revival of praise and

new relationship with Him where we transcend the mundane and we look at the eternal and we know - "As God lives so shall we live." Amen, amen and amen - praise the Lord in this place...

This is the meaning of Psalm 103 - where we hear the Psalmist say -

Praise the Lord oh my soul. In my inner most being praise His name. Praise the lord oh my soul and forget not all His benefits who forgives your sins, who heals your diseases, who redeems you from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion. Who satisfies your needs with good things so that your strength is renewed like the eagles. This is the Lord who is gracious. This is the Lord who is compassion. This is the Lord who is slow to anger and this is the Lord of abounding love.

And in verse 19 it says - that this "God establishes His throne in heaven and His kingdom rules over all."

And then comes the great litany of praise -

Praise the Lord you who are His angels.

Praise the Lord you who do His bidding.

Praise the Lord you who obey His Word. Praise

the Lord His heavenly host. Praise the Lord
you servants who do His will. Praise the Lord
for His great work. Praise the Lord
everywhere in His dominion. Praise the Lord
oh my soul and praise His holy name.

This is the God who longs to dwell within us. This is the God
who wants to tabernacle in the frame that He made before the
foundation of the earth. We are not just a social security number.
We are not just a finger print in somebody's file. We are not just
a picture on an identification license. We are the children of the
living God and our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
Amen, amen and amen - hallelujah be to God.

Isaiah 66 - we hear the prophet saying to us -

This is what the Lord says - 'Heaven is my
throne. Earth is my footstool. Where is the
house that you will build for me? Where is
the resting place for me to be? The one that
I esteem is the one of a humble and a contrite
spirit. The one that I esteem is the one who
trembles at my Word.' Let the Lord be
glorified so that we may see your joy.

The true joy and the true happiness and the true meaning and
the true purpose comes when we have a direct connection to God
through Jesus Christ and we have Him as our high priest. Amen,

amen and amen. Praise Him in this place. Let the people of the Lord praise the Lord.

Well, you say - Pastor Walker, that sounds fantastic. To be able to know that I could have a high priest with the Lord that my life could be a praise to Him would be wonderful. But we find ourselves surrounded by so much pressure, so much impinging upon our lifestyle.

We can't get rid of the gadgetry. We talk about going back to the good old days - I think of some of the good old days and I like these days much better. It is better that you have a washing machine and you have a dryer and you have all the gadgets that we have. But the gadgets aren't the answer to the problem and they are not even the problem. The problem is the fast pace that we put ourselves under and the gadgets that are helping us in that degree have hindered us.

JOKE

I heard the story told not long ago about a lady who went shopping. She bought several items and took them up to the counter to pay for them. The sales lady ask her the stock question, "Will this be cash or charge or credit card?" Anybody here ever heard this? "Cash or charge or the credit card?"

She opened her purse and began to fumble around to get out her wallet to get out the necessary cards and all of a sudden the sales lady saw that she had the VCR remote control in her purse.

The sales lady said, "Mam I don't want to be rude, but do you always carry your VCR in your purse?" She said, "No but I am today." She said, "I tried to get my husband to come shopping with me but he wouldn't. I figured this was the most evil thing I could do to ruin his whole day."

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Only the ladies are responding. Did you know that? Only the ladies are responding.

How do we get in touch with this God that we are to praise? How do we approach His throne? What is the way that we can get to Him? How can we approach His throne?

JOKE

I heard the story of the little boy who had been naughty all day. He had driven his mother to distraction. Any mothers here know what that means? I think any mother and every father has come to the point that you have talked to the kid and said, "Kid - I brought you into this world and I can take you out and I can take you out just like I can take you in."

She was at that point. She could no longer it felt like.

Finally she said to him - "If you keep acting like this there is no way you can get into heaven. How can you get into heaven?"

He said - "Oh that is easy." She said, "That's easy? How is are you going to do it?" He said, "Oh when I die and go to heaven I'm just going to go up and meet God and I'm going to keep running in and out and slamming the door until finally God is going to say

- "For goodness sake, Johnny - either come in or stay out and quit slamming that door and then I'm going to walk right in."

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But what does the Bible say? The whole book of Hebrew is written for us to have an approach to the throne.

The greatest danger that we have in living in this technological, scientific, sophisticated, educated age that knows all things -- knows everything about everything except how to live. Our problem is we don't know how to approach God.

But God inspired the writer of the book of Hebrews to tell us how we can come to the throne.

The biggest problem that we have in the Protestant movement and the biggest problem we have in the Charismatic movement and the Pentecostal movement and the Spirit-filled movement is that we don't really understand what it means to have access and to appropriate the resources that God has available to us. We go to everything else before we come to that.

JOKE

Like the lady who went to the doctor and the doctor said - I don't know that there is much we can do. The only thing I know we can do is pray. She said - Oh my goodness has it come to that?

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We make that the court of last resort rather than the court of first initiation.

Does anybody understand what I'm talking about here? We have to learn how to do that.

But the book of Hebrews was written for us to know how to approach the throne of God. That's the whole message that you find in Hebrews.

We know that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell us what Christ was doing here on earth.

Hebrews tells us what Christ is doing right now in heaven. Because the same Christ that walked on the shores of Galilee and left His imprint in the sand and His voice echoing off of the Golan Heights is the same Christ who is now at the right hand of the Father with all authority, power and ability to do what God has promised we can have. Amen, amen and amen - praise God - He is there. Hallelujah - praise Him in this place.

What does that mean then?

In these three verses we find the approach to the throne.

First of all we have to understand that if we are going to have access to the resources of God they have to come through Jesus Christ as the high priest.

We are not really oriented to understand the meaning of priesthood and that may be part of our problem. That we have the right to go into the throne of God through Jesus Christ because He is our High Priest.

There are many things to be said about Christ. There are many names to be given to Him. There are many kinds of titles that have

been given to Him. We pass out the gospels of John because in every chapter it tells us something about Jesus Christ. That is why John makes such an impact on people who are newborn Christians or people who need to be Christians. There is a convicting power in the book of John because it gives us such a symbolism of Christ.

ILLUSTRATION

He is the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Divine Teacher, The Soul Winner and the Great Physician. John calls Him the Bread of Life, the Water of Life. He is the Defender of the Weak. He is the Light of the World. And He is the Good Shepherd. He is the model sufferer. He is the one who conquers death. He is the restorer of the penitent.

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All that we can say about Jesus Christ and all of His prophetic work where He reveals to us God, all of His kingly work where He rules for us for God in us.

We have to recognize that the foundational point is His priestly work where He brings God to us and brings us to God and in that meeting we are able to find the resources we need to stand so that we can put on the whole armor of God and we can look in the devil's eye and having done all we can stand because He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world. Hallelujah be to God. Praise Him in this place...

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ILLUSTRATION

When we talk about Jesus Christ as the High Priest He is the superior person. He is greater than the prophets. He is greater than the prophets because He is the heir of the full inheritance. Because He is the channel of the creation. Because He is the expression of deity. Because He is the brightness of glory. Because He is the upholder of all things. Because He is the purifier of our sins and because He is at the right hand of the Father. As a prophet He exceeds that as priest. Amen, amen and amen.

As our priest He is greater than the angels. He is greater in rank because in His inheritance He has a more excellent name. He is greater in His power of righteousness for He holds the scepter of righteousness. He is greater in His relationship because He is the Son and the angels have been created to worship Him. He is greater in His redemption because He has given His life for sin.

He is greater than Moses. Moses was a servant. Jesus Christ is a son.

He is greater than Joshua. Joshua brought a temporary rest. Jesus Christ brings an eternal rest.

He is greater than Aaron. Like Aaron He was taken from among men. Like Aaron He was chosen of God. Like Aaron He had compassion. Like Aaron He learned obedience. Like Aaron He prayed. And like Aaron He suffered.

But He is beyond Aaron because He is the Son of the eternal God, because He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Because He is the author of our eternal salvation, because He is holy, because He is pure, because He has died for our sins, because He has been exalted in heaven and because He is there as our intercessory at the right hand of the Father. Amen, amen and amen. That's why we worship Him.

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Praise God He is the priest.

You say - that sounds so abstract. That sounds so high and mighty. Can I bring it really home to me?

Well you know sometimes when we talk about having access to God we make it too high and mighty.

ILLUSTRATION

I have been known on occasion to ski, you are aware of that I assume.

One time I was skiing out in Utah and it was a cold, bitter day. Carmelita was skiing then but she doesn't ski on cold, bitter days. In fact, she wished she had never skied on any day. The ultimate, consummate commitment to me was skiing. She hated every moment of it. We would get on the lift sometimes and she would look over at me and say - I must love you to be doing such a stupid thing as I'm doing now.

That's the test of a real marriage until she fell down. She divorced skiing - stayed with me - I'm glad it wasn't the other way around.

But I'm on the lift with this young lady who is of college age -- looked to be maybe 20- or 21 and we are starting up on the lift and it was cold. You get inside of yourself and you just kind of nod to each other and you don't say anything -- the two of you on the lift.

We get up about half way to the top of the mountain and the lift stops. That means somebody fell down somewhere at the bottom.

So we are sitting there and so we are sitting there and nothing being said and she looks over to me and she says - You know I'm a college student.

I don't want to talk to her - I'm cold. But she says - I don't go to just any kind of college. I said - Well, that's wonderful. She says - I go to a special college. I said - That's wonderful - I am glad you go to a special college. I'm not helping her a bit. I'm not being facilitative in any kind of a way. I just kind of chucked my counselor idioms -- I didn't say idiots -- I said "idioms."

She said _ Don't you want to know what kind of special college I go to.

Well, I said - It's okay - what kind of special college do you go to.

She said - I go to a Christian college. She said - I'm a Christian. She said - Are you a Christian?

I started to say - No, I'm a cold skier and I wish you would shut up. But I didn't say that.

So I kind of grunted and said - Yes I'm a Christian.

She said - I'm a Spirit-filled Christian. She said, Do you have the Holy Ghost?

I looked over and said, Yes I have the Holy Ghost and I am the pastor of a Chiasmatic Pentecostal Church.

She said - Do your people have the Holy Ghost?

I said - Well that's a little "ify" but...

She said - You know I'm going to be a medical missionary. But I haven't always been a Christian. When I was in high school I got with a gang. I have had three abortions. I've attempted suicide five times.

Finally the last time when I overdosed on drugs they saved my life and put me in a mental institution. They tried to give me a rehab program and I rebelled against them.

But there was an Orderly in that mental hospital that started talking to me and telling me that Jesus Christ was my High Priest and He could do something for me that nobody else could do. That while the hospital was helping and using all the resources they had available that could be of help to me the ultimate source was Jesus Christ, Himself.

He got me to reading the Bible and he started praying with me and some of the other inmates there and they let him have a little Bible study and the next thing you know she says - I was saved by the grace of God. Then I was filled with the Holy Spirit as He led me in that walk. Now I am going to a Christian college and I am going to go to a mission field and I am going to preach the gospel as a medical missionary.

We got off the lift and she looked at me and said - I'm going to pray for you and I'm going to pray that God will anoint you with as much power as there is as the snow that covers this mountain will be yours.

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He is the high priest. He is the high priest.

That just made my day. I skied better than I had skied in a long time after that.

But you see the second thing you have to see in this text this morning is that not only do we have access to the resources of God through Jesus Christ as the High Priest but we can actualize a relationship with God that comes about through mercy and grace. That when we actualize those resources into our life and to actualize is to internally register a principle, a power, a way of life, a set of values, we internalize a way to live.

When we actualize through Christ this way to live then we can see what God can do. But then there is a formula here of how we have to approach His throne. When you begin to look at this we can

see on the one side of the equation -- any of you remember your Algebra? Do any of you speak Algebra?

JOKE

It's kind of like the story of the country family that never had anybody go to college and one of the their sons went to college and they were so proud of him. They lived way up in the mountains.

He came home for vacation and they brought in all the neighbors one day. They said - Son, we know you are taking Algebra - speak some Algebra for our neighbors. Well he didn't want to embarrass his folks - He said - I don't want to speak any Algebra. Come on - we are putting a lot of money into this - speak some Algebra for our neighbors.

So he thought for a moment and said - Okay - Pie R Squared Pie R Squared.

His mother said - Oh no, son, pie are round - cornbread are square.

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On one side of the equation is Faith + Confidence = Mercy + Grace.

According to Algebra that I hated with a passion. I got a lot of support out there for that.

If you have an equation - one side is to equal the other.
Faith + Confidence = Mercy + Grace.

We know that we have this High Priest who has gone through the heavens and who is tempted in all ways as we are but yet without sin. He is at the right hand of the Father. We know that we have access to Him.

But the way that we do that is - We hold firmly to the faith we profess in verse 14.

When we talk about faith we know that Hebrews 11:6 -

(TAPE IS TURNED OVER)

... for he that that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.

We know that verse 1 says -

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the confidence of things not seen.

But when you really analyze that verse you begin to understand that there is more to that verse than really meets the eye. That when we really understand holding firmly to the faith and we look at the etymological development of that word faith, it comes out of the Latin word fetas. That Latin word has two different aspects to it. One is - belief - which is an intellectual process by which we accept a proposition or a principle or a way of life. The other is a sense of fidelity or loyalty where we commit ourselves to that proposition, that principle or that way of life.

On the one sense we intellectually accept it and on the other side we emotionally commit ourselves to it. And it gives us the power of faith.

ILLUSTRATION

I ran across this the other day - it says -

Faith is knowing that it can be done.

Faith is an inner conviction.

Faith is an unshakable assurance.

Faith is a profound knowing that comes before
reality confirms it.

Faith is a sense of destiny. It is possible.

It is going to happen.

Faith is knowing that you can do it.

A person who walks the walk of faith knows that he can solve his problems. He knows that he can detach himself from that awful habit. He knows he can extricate himself from his negative enslavement. The person who walks the walk of faith faces his projects affirming - "I know I can do it, if God will help me and I am sure God wants to help me." "I know I can do it when I am totally dedicated to Him which I really am." "I know I can do it after everything is in readiness. I am trusting God to help me get my act together." I know I can do it only with the help of my Lord; He is my best

friend. He wants me to succeed." "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And I know it is possible -- after all, deep down in your heart you know it will work out. An unquenchable confidence keeps fueling your feelings that you are going to make it. Again and again the person who succeeds did so because he or she didn't know it was impossible.

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Faith breeds confidence. And here we find in the King James - it says - "We can boldly approach the throne of God." the NIV says - "With confidence we can approach the throne of God, holding firmly to the faith that we have, boldly or confidently going into the throne." That word "confidence" and "boldly" are really the same. They are not isolated events. They are commensurate, meaning the same.

Confidence means to have heart. There is so much today to keep us from having heart. So much happens to us.

JOKE

It is kind of like the man who went to the Psychiatrist and the Psychiatrist was responding to her and he said to this husband who went to see him, "Now tell me - did you become an insignificant, enslaved, no-good, pip squeak with no confidence all

of a sudden or did it just happen naturally through marriage and parenthood?

##

Or, you know we get to the place that we psychologically don't want to assume responsibility for our adulthood.

We live in a day when everybody wants to blame somebody else for what is going on because people don't want to take the confidence or the boldness to stand up for who they are and be responsible for their behavior. Amen?

ILLUSTRATION

You know it is kind of like - if you read certain psychologies and I have read a lot of them - and you put them all together you get very confused.

Like it is awful to be an orphan. It's poor to be an only child. It's terrible to be the youngest child. It is absolutely consuming to be a middle child. It is absolutely over-powering to be the eldest child.

You think about that, the only way to have a chance in this life is to be born as an adult. That's the only thing I know you can do.

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But what is confidence? When you look at that word confidence - it has two aspects also. On the one side of the coin it is to express your motivated feelings. It is a word that is used of

those who preach the gospel regardless of the odds even though they were told in the book of Acts, that book that word is used in that way even, though they were told not to preach, that they would be martyred, they would be persecuted, they would be put into prison and they were beaten to emphasize the fact of what was going to happen to them. They said - We can do but one thing - "We have to stand and speak what we have seen and we have heard." That's confidence.

Confidence is also the willingness to have the intestinal fortitude to come in before God without fear because of your elder brother, Jesus Christ, who has already paid the price, who has made the way and through Him you have the right to come directly to the throne of God. You don't need a human priest. You don't need a human sacrifice. You have been made a child of God. He is your Father and we, together, can come to Him and we know in no wise what has cast us out.

ILLUSTRATION

How many of you remember Kate Smith? Anybody old enough to remember her? Let me see your hand right now. Thank you.

You know that Kate Smith was known for two things - her singing of "God Bless America" and her singing of the "National Anthem."

But Kate Smith was a dedicated woman. Kate Smith who for years was the voice of our "National Anthem" was once asked what the secret of her confident, victorious lifestyle was? She

replied, it was a result of an experience from her childhood. Once she and two other girls were on a road on the Chesapeake Bay. They were having such a good time they did not notice that the outgoing tide had swept them far from the shore and it was nearly dark. They rowed as hard as they could but could make no progress against the tide. They cried for help but no one could hear them.

In the midst of her fear Kate Smith remembered the Bible said something about "where two or three are gathered together in His name and asking Him..." She told her two friends about it and then she said, "We have three. God will save us if we ask Him." So they began to pray.

Out of the gaveling darkness loomed the line of a boat. They were taken on board and carried back to safety.

From that time on - in trouble - in need - in disappointment - in every circumstance of life - her philosophy has simply been - "Try asking God."

##

Hallelujah. Faith + Confidence.

But Faith + Confidence equals Mercy and Grace.

Now He does all of these things when we approach the throne and we can come in there with the boldness and we can come in with the confidence in order that we can have mercy and grace to help us in the time of need.

The word "mercy" is a very important word for us. The word "mercy" really means that God does not give us what we deserve. It is God withholding of the punishment that we really ought to have. Because the eternal principle of His nature is this -- that He is trying to bring us to eternal salvation through His own self-sacrifice regardless of our resistance, our obstruction, or our refusal. He keeps trying. He gives you the right to resist. He gives us the right to obstruct. He gives us the right to refuse and some people do. But He never keeps trying. That's mercy. He never keeps trying.

Grace is God's unmerited favor, His unmerited favor that is given to us. Grace is God doing for us what we can't do for ourselves. While mercy is the withholding of judgement, grace is the bestowal of His favor and He gives it to us in such joyous amounts.

In Romans 1 and 7 it tells us that that grace is the foundation of peace.

Romans 3 and 24 it tells us that that grace is the gift from God.

Romans 5 and 20 it says that that grace is greater than all of our sins.

Titus 2 and 11 says that that grace is imparted by Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9 and 10 it tells us that grace is the real meaning of Calvary.

ILLUSTRATION

I received this letter in the mail the other day that I think puts it so succinctly. It came from a Chaplain in a prison. He talks about an interview that he has had with one of his prisoners.

You see you never understand, you never really know - we write to a lot of prisoners who get our tapes and the libraries in many prisons have our tapes. And the prisoners listen to them and they write us letters and if I had time I could take the whole rest of the afternoon giving you some of those letters -- because of your worship and because of the impact you make, because you tell them about mercy and you tell them about grace.

But here is the letter from the Chaplain.

Dear Dr. Walker, You probably don't know me or the person I'm about to tell you about. It was according to his testimony through your preaching via radio that God rescued him from suicide just a few months ago.

According to his statement to me he had come to the end where life no longer had any meaning or purpose after years of alcohol and drug abuse and all the hellish things that go along with that lifestyle.

As he lay there on the floor with the plastic bag ready to put over his head, while he inhaled natural gas from a disconnected line, he decided to go out listening to the gospel. As he turned the dial in the late hours he came across you, Dr. Walker, preaching about Jesus Christ.

As he listened to you speak on the subject of suicide, the Lord convicted him and he changed his mind.

Later in a private session with me he accepted Jesus into his life and prayed for deliverance from his destructive lifestyle.

Just wanted you to know that God rescued this person through the preaching of the Word. I thought you would like to know.

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Shall we pray.