

Come to the Kingdom **Hebrews 4:14-16**

Introduction

A couple of years ago I taught a Wednesday night class centered on the book of Hebrews. My subtitle for the course was:

The Book of Better

I told the participants that Hebrews was written to Jews who were under intense pressure to abandon their faith and go back to the peaceful lives they had before they started to follow Jesus.

- Back then, they were Jewish – still waiting for the Messiah.
- Back then, they were able to live in their hometowns. They had not been driven to other cities by their persecutors.
- Back then, they still had their businesses, their circle of friends, their routines.

But once they started to follow Jesus, all of that changed. And many of the changes were not good.

Thus the recipients of the letter were wrestling with the question:

Is it worth it?

- Is our faith worth all the suffering we have to go through?
 - Is it worth having to worship in secret?
 - Is it worth having to be careful what we say in public settings?

The writer of Hebrews was strongly encouraging them to “hang in there” in verses like this:

See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today.” (Hebrews 3:12-13)

He told them that no matter what they were going through, their faith in Jesus Christ was a better option.

- No matter what you are suffering
- No matter what you have given up
- No matter what you have endured
- Following Jesus is worth it...

Throughout the book the writer tells them that there is a glorious payoff if we just keep the faith.

- Yes! The world is a dark place to live.
- Yes! It's hard to be a follower of Jesus in the current culture.
- Yes! It look like the enemy is winning.

The payoff for remaining faithful are the words recorded in the reading from Hebrews 4 today, particularly this wonderful invitation:

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

All this Lenten season we have been praying:

THY KINGDOM COME

Today the invitation is reversed. Because of what Jesus endures on the cross, you are invited to:

COME TO THE KINGDOM

We can accept that invitation because of what we commemorate here today. By his death Jesus opens the door to heaven. He creates access for all those who put their faith in Him.

- He became the perfect and only acceptable sacrifice for our sins.
- And it was those sins that kept the door of heaven closed... until that first Good Friday nearly 2000 years ago.

On that day, outside the city walls of Jerusalem, on a hill known as Golgotha – the place of the skull – the perfect Lamb of God took on Himself every sin that would be ever be committed and died so that those sins could be forgiven.

So today, we come. We come to the kingdom.

In just a few minutes, after the choir sings it anthem, we will pray a responsive prayer to prepare our hearts for the story of Jesus.

- 6 readers will remind us of what Jesus did and said.
- Following the telling of the story, I will invite you to come.
- Come and hammer a nail in the cross.
- Remind yourself that He died for your sins.

COME TO THE KINGDOM

He invites you.

Amen.