

Thank you for prayers and support for Joyce’s mum- as we see our parents age and face medical challenges, we realize the moments we do get should be special and not taken for granted. TODAY is all we may have!

“Today”- well, it is today- the here and now- the seconds, minutes and hours associated with this day. It describes the present. Not yesterday, what happened, or tomorrow, what may happen but the moments in time, decisions and opportunities given to us THIS DAY!

But “today” can be effected by what happened yesterday- illness, trials and challenges, failures and victories. How we lived yesterday can bring momentum, good or bad into today. Today, can be effected by tomorrow- what we will face, or what we think will happen.

“Today” has always been an important word biblically and spiritually. God is concerned with how we live our lives today- decisions we make today have an impact on us good or bad. They change the trajectory of our lives either toward Him or away from Him!

In the church in Halifax we have been studying the book of Hebrews. It is a letter that above everything else, the writer wanted them to SEE Jesus, understand He is supreme, He is above all- everything was created by him- He is the “exact image/representation of God”- when you see Jesus, you see God. They were questioning their faith, wondering if it was all worth it.

I believe it is a letter for our churches TODAY! It is a message that points our hearts to true north- gets our lives pointed in the right direction. Like a compass, it will point to north pole. But it can be effected by magnetic pulls. I don’t know about you, but I’ve got a lot of magnetic pulls in my life, especially over the past few years. Anxieties, worries, discouragements, frustrations- pain emotionally. It’s so easy to get pulled in so many directions.

Hebrews points us back to Jesus- resets our course, and challenges us to keep the needle pointed in the direction of Christ, our true north!

Today, in our time together, we will look at reasons why today is important, and how we can deal with life and make sure our trajectory leads us upward, toward things that really matter, things beyond this life, things eternal!

Pray

### **Read Hebrews 3:1-14**

#### **1) Today...Take Note Of Jesus**

“Holy Brothers and Sisters, partners in a heavenly calling”. In the previous chapter we see that Jesus made atonement for us, redeems us- he brings us back to God, reconciles us, restores us! We are not simply set free, but we become God’s sons and daughters, his family. There is a great quote from Isaiah that describes what Christ has done- “here I am with the children God has given me.” I can’t help but picture all of us gathered as family presented before God, not in our sin, but holy and pure! In Hebrews 2:11 referring to Jesus he say “he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.” THAT’S US!

“Partners in a heavenly calling”- not any calling, nothing like this one. It is a calling that takes our gaze upward and eternal. It is not a temporary calling. I’ve had several callings in my life- was in counseling/ social work for 8 years following university. My professors expressed great vision for a career in social work! I changed careers, got into pharmaceutical sales- I love medicine, am fascinated by the human body, how it works. I actually wanted to be a doctor growing up- would read medical text books. Would love to do first aid on any and everyone! When I got into pharmaceutical sales, I thought this was my calling! I’m by no means a typical sales person, but I loved medicine. I had no desire for the full time

ministry. We would go to classes about being in the ministry- why am I here? Joyce and I will be a great help and encouragement to the staff. But at some point I felt called, God was working to plant seeds for something I never saw myself doing. Then I got out of the ministry and back into pharmaceutical sales—thought that was it. Then felt called again back in 2011. Here we are!

My point is, most of our callings can be temporary and can change as life changes around us. Our heavenly calling is something that really matters—it is a special privilege! A special calling.

Why, you are called by God’s Son himself! And you are called to partner with Him! This is not just anyone- but God’s SON! As you will see in chapter 2 of Hebrews, Jesus is our pioneer- he went where no one has gone before- he destroyed the power of death, broke down all the barriers between us and God and will each other. He shared in our humanity- God became flesh. He delivered us and now is able to help and support us.

There is reason to take note of Jesus- to “think down, along and come to a conclusion; to fix our attention on him” and by doing so are inspired by what we have in Him, who WE ARE IN HIM!

Today, take note of Jesus! Then realize...

## 2) Today... “We Are His House”

We are not just a part of any house, any community or city. This house is not effected by power outages- with the ice storm, our home has been without power. Being here, get a little nervous. It’s not effected by changes in life- we are packing up Joyce’s mums apartment as she was in the hospital with an aortic aneurysm. She is 88, and it’s important for someone to care for her on a consistent basis. This house doesn’t break down, get old and need fixing- it’s NOT a “fixer upper”, it is built by God and Jesus themselves- creator of the universe. If they can create all that we see, then they can build a pretty good house!

Moses is known as one of Israel’s greatest leaders- “faithful over Israel(God’s house), but Jesus is not part of the house, he is the chief architect and builder.

In Ephesians 2: 21 “In him(Jesus) the whole building is joined together and rises to become a temple in the Lord. And in him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God LIVES by his Spirit.”

I must admit, it’s hard to fully process this, what this means, how special this really is! I’m too attached to the homes here on earth so to speak- magnetic pull for the things of the world- I’ve got to remember TODAY- I/WE ARE A GOD’S HOUSE!

There’s reason to “hold firmly to our confidence and the hope we take pride in.” There’s reason to “walk where it is solid”. Today, keep your focus!

Today...

## 3) Today...Deal With What’s Inside

Verses 7-11 speak to Israel’s up and down relationship with God. Moments of celebration and moments of faithlessness. The lesson of Israel shows us that who we will become tomorrow is a result of who we are TODAY, in the moment!

This is taken almost directly from **Psalm 95. Verse 7b**, “**Today, if only you would obey him! He says, “do not be stubborn like you were at Meribah, like they were that day at Massah in the wilderness...”**

These were not geographical places as much as it describes the condition of Israel’s heart in the wilderness. Meribah means “quarreling/strife” and Massah means “testing”. That is what Israel is known for- quarreling, grumbling and testing God!

Listen to the beginning of Psalm 95 **“Come! Let’s sing for joy to the Lord! Let’s shout praises to our protector who delivers us!** (word “sing” is not forceful enough to describe what they really mean- picture singing your favorite song in the privacy of your home or car, music cranked up and all by yourself- how do you sing? That’s what it’s talking about! And “shout”- is a victory shout- like the shout given when the walls of Jericho fell)

**Let us enter his presence with thanksgiving! Let’s shout to to him in celebration! For the Lord is a great God, a great king who is superior to all gods. The depths of the earth are in his hand and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it. His hands formed the dry land. Come! Let us bow down and worship! Let’s kneel before the Lord our creator! For He is our God: we are the people of his pasture, the sheep he owns...”**

How could Israel go from THIS to what we read later- the hardness of their hearts.

It wasn’t about geography and where they were at physically, it was all about what was going on inside, anatomically, INSIDE their hearts!

God performed miracle after miracle to show them He was with them. 10 plagues brought down on Egypt to show God was on their side, God was defeating the gods of Egypt on their home turf, in their “house” so to speak. Delivered, the Passover meal, set free from slavery. God was at work!

They get to the Red Sea, the Egyptian army is pursuing and they panic. God’s protected them, but they can’t get past “TODAY” In the moment they can’t see God saving them- He parts the sea and they are saved and the army destroyed!

They sing and dance and sing and shout until now they become thirsty and now God can’t provide water. Today, in the moment they grumble and complain- God provides water.

They have water, but now want food- give us food- Today, in the moment, this day they choose to challenge God. God provides manna and quail.

That’s not good enough- they long for what they thought they had in Egypt- better food there than “TODAY”.

Every daily decision in their ‘TODAY’ made it easier to question God’s care, his heart and character. The fact that he was a shepherd who cared and guided them.

How could they come to the Promised Land and see everything they always wanted and not believe and trust God? Those daily decisions to be ungrateful and grumble, complain, test God.

They had it all physically, geographically so to speak, but they didn’t deal with their hearts(anatomy).

How could they see where they were as “evil”- that’s how hard their hearts got? They thought the miracles that God performed were about them, what God could do for THEM!

All of the things that God did for them was meant to lay a foundation of faith and point them to the character of God. To learn to trust Him and his care!

We get into trouble and our hearts are on a slippery slope when following God or being a Christian is about or for US! What God, Christ can do for me. When I focus on what I get from God- the physical, geographical- my wants, desires.

I'm not going to promise everything is going to go great as a Christian, that you will be “happy” on your terms, but you will find real “peace” if your heart is in the right place!

Did you know that Psalm 95 is read at the beginning of “Sabbot”, the Sabbath? It is a reminder that “shabbot”, rest is found only in God, in the heart of hearts. And for the Christian real “rest” is still coming, but we will get it!

It's a matter on where or whom our focus is on! That's why the letter to Hebrews constantly brings them back to “consider, take note of Jesus. It's why Jesus himself says come to me to find rest. Are we “weary and burdened”? I am sometime! There's a lot of life coming at us from all directions, a lot of plates that need to be balanced. Just when I think I've got balance- well...

What does Jesus say- it is so similar to the theme found in Hebrews- I've got you, I've been there- come learn from me, I've had to deal with life to, I've had to face the pressures and demands and challenges like you do. You can find “rest for your souls”- real “shabbot”, real rest!

But we need community, we need family, we need one another. We need courage, strength, help and support to live how God wants us to live.

There is a commitment demanded of one another to “see to it”. To look into with depth and discernment and perception. To see to it that no one has a “sinful unbelieving heart”. That we deal with what's going on inside our hearts.

To “encourage one another”- “parakaleo” to call to one's side, to have an advocate or counselor. The Holy Spirit is referred to as the “paraklete”- the counselor, the adviser and defender.

A good counselor learns why someone does what they do, doesn't just treat the outward symptoms or actions. Sometimes as helpers of one another we are more like “police” giving tickets for violations rather than counseling a persons heart. What is the underlying condition? Why do we/they do what they do, what are the motives or reasons?

Being a police officer for sin is easy- I just point it out and tell you to stop. I might even give consequences of another violation! You see we are dealing with geography again- the externals, not what is going on inside the heart, anatomically!

It is much harder to be a counselor, it means investment, time, effort and energy, spiritually and emotionally to get to the bottom of things.

It's not enough to tell someone to stop being anxious or worry. I know I shouldn't be anxious but I am, I know I shouldn't worry about things but I do. What I need is someone to help me sort through things, maybe help provide direction or a plan. I may even need a follow up call- I guess that is why we are supposed to do this “daily”- “day after day”.

I remember helping a father and son with their anger. Both of them would have blow outs, shouting and language, even some shoving and in your face standoffs. They are both disciples- do you think they know not to do this? Do you think they felt shame at what they did? Does telling them to “stop” or further shaming them really help them? May be for a while. I needed to “encourage them”- get involved with both of them, separately and together. I could read James 1 that you need to “slow to become angry” and that your anger doesn't bring about he righteousness God desires. They knew that, they felt that! What they needed to explore was James 4 “What causes quarrels and fights among you- doesn't it come from

within, your heart, your motives, you “want something and don’t get it so you fight.” I had to help each one of them find out what it is at their heart of hearts they wanted. Deal with the anatomy, not the geography!

Sin is deceitful, it promises something, but leaves us empty. It is a fraud and illusion and it “hardens” or “dries up our hearts”.

The example of Israel is just that- to show that if we don’t deal with the inside, the heart, if we don’t make a commitment to deal with things TODAY, our heart will become dried out for tomorrow. It has no life! It is a commitment to community and involvement in one another’s lives.

This leads us to our last point that I want to leave with us today.

#### **4) Today...Meditate, Not Murmur**

The words “murmur” and “mediate” are very similar in Hebrew. Both carry the idea of the sound “mmmm” rolling around in the mind, reflecting. One is in a negative way- leads to grumbling! “MMM under your breath”. To meditate is to “murmur with pleasure”

We come full circle with this passage. “For we have become partners with Christ...remember we were told we were “partners if a heavenly calling(vs1).

We have been changed inside out because of Christ. He has partnered with us! He wants you a part of his team, his family, his community! This is not any partnership, this is not any membership- this is not any family or son you are partnering with. This is God’s family, God’s house- you are partnered with God himself, with Christ.

In both vs 6 and 14 we read about holding to our confidence and the hope we take pride in. Why should we be proud? Look at who we have as partner! Look at who’s house we are a part of! God’s not going to desert us, He’s got us.

How confident do we need to be? Let me ask you, “who provided the guarantee?” How reliable is that promise and guarantee? It is from God/Christ himself!

Don’t you hate the fine print in guarantees? We’ll replace it for free, provided \_\_\_\_\_. Joyce and I bought travel insurance for a trip we were going to take. We couldn’t go due to immigration. When we tried to get our money back, there was the fine print that made us ineligible. Until we read the fine print- unless you lost your job. Well we lost our job and got a refund. If not for that, we would have lost the insurance!

There is no fine print with God. Large print- “If in fact, we hold our initial confidence/hold firmly our confidence.” If TODAY you decide to be grateful, not grumble. If you decide to partner with Christ, remember who’s you are- commitment Christ has made for you. You can take that guarantee to the bank!

How confident does God want us to be? If I have the title for my car or home, who’s car or home is it? How confident am I about the ownership? You can have the best argument, make a big deal about how you should be the rightful owner. I have the title! The promise of a property that entitles me to what is guaranteed in the agreement.

Now, YOU HAVE A TITLE TO GOD’S HOUSE! MMMeditate on that, chew on that! A HOME IN HEAVEN, YOUR HEAVENLY CALLING!

Who we will become tomorrow is the result of who we are TODAY! The decisions we make in the moment to meditate and not murmur impact our hearts in the future. Like Israel small decisions in the moment lead to who we become in our character tomorrow!

To deal with Today, we must “take note of Jesus”- who we are partnered with, who has brought us into HIS HOUSE. We must continually personally and collectively make sure we are dealing with the anatomical not geographical- what’s going inside. And we must meditate not murmur on what we can have confidence in- that partnership with Christ, that heavenly calling- and remember TODAY, you have the title!

What will you do with TODAY?