



# DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

## Sunday, November 13-19 (B) – Hebrews 10:11-14, (15-18), 19-25

**Focus:** *The Posture of Faith, Hope, and Love*

### **word of life**

**“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.”** Hebrews 10:23 (NRSV)

Read Hebrews 10:11-14, (15-18), 19-25a

Our lessons over the past five weeks have come from the letter to the Hebrews. The author has written extensively about Jesus as the great high priest who offers the perfect sacrifice of himself to restore our relationship with God.

1. *What have you learned about Jesus as the high priest?*
2. *What questions do you still have?*

The verses for today offer yet one more point as proof of the superiority of Jesus’ sacrifice; but it is a subtle one. This proof is seen in the posture of the priest. Read Hebrews 10:11-12 again, and note the contrasting postures. Every earthly priest stands day after day, continually doing his service, never completely finished, offering again and again the same sacrifices, yet never fully taking away sin. Contrast this posture with that of Jesus, the great high priest.

When Christ offered the single sacrifice of himself, he “sat down at the right hand of God.” (Hebrews 10:12 NRSV) The perfect sacrifice has been made; his work was complete. The bridge between God and humanity had been built and can never be destroyed. The task of atonement – of restoring the relationship between God and humanity – the gracious gift of forgiveness was accomplished once for all. Jesus’ final words on the cross were validated and true: “It is finished.” (John 19:30 NRSV)

3. *Why do we need a bridge between God and humanity?*
4. *What questions do you have about atonement?*

Having established and validated the unique, superior sacrifice of Jesus, the author turns to the response that the believer should make to this once for all gift. “Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way ... and since we have a great high priest over the house of God....” (Hebrews 10:19 NRSV) Knowing all this to be true, the response is in the form of an exhortation: “Let us ... approach ... hold fast ... and consider ....” (Hebrews 10:22-24 NRSV)

5. *How do you respond to something you know to be true?*
6. *What is your response to God’s gift of forgiveness?*

In the Greek New Testament, verses 19-25 (of Hebrews chapter 10) are written as one extended, eloquent sentence, thereby suggesting a unified faithful response. The response has three elements: 1) “let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith...” (verse 22) – the response of faith; 2) “let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering...” (verse 23) – the response of hope; and 3) “let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds...” (verse 24) – the response of love. Paul wrote of the same three-fold response to God’s gift of grace through Christ: “And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” (I Corinthians 13:13 NRSV)

7. *How do we live to reflect these three elements of our response to God?*
8. *Do you agree that “the greatest of these is love?” Why or why not?*

## **word among us**

Stand for the opening. Kneel for confession. Stand for the hymn of praise. Sit for the reading of the Word. Stand for the proclamation of the Gospel. Sit for the sermon. Stand for the profession of faith (the creed). Kneel for the prayers. Stand for the sharing of the peace. Sit for the offering. Stand for the Great Thanksgiving. Kneel at the altar to receive the bread and wine. Stand for the closing hymn.

WHEW! We certainly get our exercise Sunday mornings as we do our liturgical calisthenics!

1. *Why do we go up and down so often in worship?*
2. *What does our posture say about the various elements of the service?*

Posture is important for the writer of Hebrews. It indicates the superiority of Jesus the high priest (whose sacrifice of himself fulfills and completes the need for sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins) over the inadequate sacrifice of the earthly high priest. The earthly high priest stands because his task is never fully done; Jesus, the great high priest, is seated at the right hand of God because he offers a perfect sacrifice which spans the chasm between God and humanity. We confess this in the words of the Apostles' Creed: "He (Jesus) is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty ...."

3. *What can you learn by observing someone's posture?*
4. *What posture do we take before God?*

The confession that Jesus seated at the right hand of God calls forth a response from the believer. The author of Hebrews articulates a three-fold response that is familiar to the Christian. We are freed from having to offer sacrifices because of the once for all sacrifice of Jesus, the great high priest. We are to approach God with a full, confident faith; we are to stand fast in a sure and certain hope in the power and promises of God; and we are to consider ways to foster love and good deeds, following the example of Jesus, the great high priest.

5. *What does it mean to you to be able to approach God with a full, confident faith?*
6. *How might a Christian foster love and good deeds?*

## **faith practice in daily life**

### **Serve all people, following the example of Christ**

We have been joined to Christ in our baptism. This relationship gives us forgiveness, life, and salvation. No longer do we have to rely on our feeble attempts to please God; Christ has done it all for us. All this raises important questions:

7. *What are you going to do, now that you don't have to do anything to earn your salvation?*
8. *How do you live into your baptism?*

Hebrews offers the answer: Live in faith, with hope, to love. It's a posture of grateful trust in what God has done in Christ once for all. It's a posture of hopeful anticipation of what God will do in the future. It's a posture of what we can do now as faithful, hopeful servants of the great high priest, Jesus Christ.

9. *What posture do you hope to take during the coming weeks?*

### **Prayer**

Help us, O Christ, the great high priest, to live with faith, hope, and love in response to all you have done for us. Amen

## ***last word***

Look for ways this week to live with faith, hope, and love.