

The church office is still without power and most likely will be for another week. We had worship yesterday in the fellowship hall, 35 people attended. We are not sure where we will hold this coming Sunday's service, but we will contact you when more information becomes available. If you need assistance please call me at 270-304-1682.

Epiphany 4 – Year B  
Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY  
Hebrews 3:1-6  
Pastor Paul Horn

February 1, 2009

**Fix your thoughts on Jesus: He has made you members of his house**

**Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. <sup>2</sup> He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. <sup>3</sup> Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. <sup>4</sup> For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. <sup>5</sup> Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. <sup>6</sup> But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.**

It's nice to have a home.... a home that has power so you can have heat and a working stove. It's nice to have a home that has running water, working internet and phone lines. I'm sure that many of you were thinking as the ice built up, "I hope the roof doesn't leak. I sure hope the power doesn't go out. I pray that the water line doesn't burst. I hope we have enough batteries and candles." On late Tuesday evening or early Wednesday morning if you listened very closely, every 30 seconds you could hear trees snap and fall to the ground and you thought, "I hope a tree doesn't land on our house or garage." Cheer up, my dear friends! Today, the Holy Spirit brings good news for weary home owners. Forget about your ice-laden homes and downed trees for now and fix your thoughts on Christ who made you members of his house.

In our lesson this morning from Hebrews, the author begins chapter three by saying, "Therefore..." Anytime you read a book in the New Testament and you stumble upon this word, stop reading and ask, "What is this there-for?" By writing "therefore" the author means to say, "Pay attention! I'm about to make an application based on what I just said!" In chapter 2 the author explains to the Jewish Christians in Rome that the Christ had to come in human flesh so that he could die. Christ also was true God so that by his death he would have the power to destroy the devil and all who are held by the slavery of death. By his death, Christ made atonement for the sins of all people: atonement means that Jesus made all people at one with the Father. He restored the broken relationship between sinners and a holy God caused by the fall into sin. The writer adds that because Jesus was true man, he was also attacked by temptation. Because he was also true God, he never once fell into sin. Because he was that perfect God-man, he is able to help us in our temptations.

"Therefore," he writes, "fix your thoughts on Jesus." You and I cry out, "Yes! Based on

what you just said, why wouldn't we pay attention to Jesus?" As we wander around on this earthly home, we are constantly blasted by temptation. We only need to sit down in the lush grass of the Garden and Eden and observe the events that transpired there and realize that the ancient serpent continues to employ his same tactics on us. He casts doubt into our minds and hearts. "Does God still love me when he allows \_\_\_\_\_ to happen?" When we have so many problems in our lives it feels as if we have no God and no promise from him. Then the devil tempts us to ignore God and his Word and to refrain from prayer, because, what good will it do anyway? These temptations are meant to lead us away from God and his house and to focus on ourselves or other vices that offer a way out, or worse yet, self-pity and deep despair. The temptation to doubt God and his promises appeals to our human reason, because our human reason cannot understand why God allows bad things to happen to his people.

The writer to the Hebrews says, "**Therefore, fix your thoughts on Jesus.**" Concentrate on Jesus when you are beaten down by temptation. Focus on Jesus, because he is "**the Apostle and High Priest.**" (vs1) An apostle is one called by Christ, commissioned to carry out his specific command. Jesus is THE Apostle. His Father chose him to carry out his plan to save the world from sin and Satan, from death and hell. The Apostle, Jesus, carried out his Father's plan as our High Priest. We reflect on the Old Testament priests to understand how Jesus is our Great High Priest. The Old Testament priests offered sacrifices for the people. They announced forgiveness of sins to the people. They offered prayers to the LORD on behalf of the people. Jesus brought a sacrifice for sins for all people. He was that one-time sacrifice, which he offered on the altar of Golgotha for all people. The Father demanded that a sacrifice be made for all the times you and I have fallen into temptation, for all the times we've doubted our God, for the times we've ignored him, for thinking he didn't love us anymore, Jesus offered himself on the cross for us and our sins. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Lamb went willingly and obediently to his death, so that he could set you apart from the rest of the world afflicted by the devil.

That is why the writer to the Hebrews addresses the recipients of his letter as "**holy brothers.**" (vs1) *To be holy* means to be set apart for a special purpose. You and I have been made holy brothers and sisters through Christ's blood. His blood covers over our sins, making us pure and blameless in his Father's eyes. This is the only requirement for admission into heaven: to be pure, sinless, free from blame. Because you are holy through Christ's blood, your special purpose is to be **sharers in the heavenly calling.** (vs1) You have been called by heaven to be holy through the blood of the Lamb. You have been called to heaven because your High Priest's death has made you holy. Because you are heaven-bound, the writer to the Hebrews says, "**You are his house.**" (vs6) Being covered by Jesus' blood has so many privileges!

You and all other believers in Jesus are the bricks that make up God's house, his Church. The apostle Peter writes, "**You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**" (1Pet 2:5) What is so comforting is that Christ built his house. We had nothing to contribute to our place in God's heavenly home; not our good works, not our sparkling personalities, not our good attitudes. But Christ did everything for you to make

his house. Christ called you to faith in him through your baptism. Through the washing with water and the Word, Christ Jesus gave you the benefits of his High Priestly sacrifice on the cross. Christ made you a child of his Heavenly Father. As a child of your Father's home, you enjoy all the rights, privileges and blessings that come with being a member of his household.

You know who Steve Jobs' is? He's the CEO of Apple Inc., which manufactures the iPod, iPhone and Macintosh computers. If you are a member of Steve Jobs' home, that means you can boast about the millions of dollars you have at your disposal. How much more so, as a member of God's house, that you can boast about the hope you have?!

**"We are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast."**

(vs6) The hope that you have is that you are members of God's house, disobedient children who have been forgiven, made pure through Christ's blood, bound for heaven. This hope is not some frivolous wish, "I hope we don't get any more freezing rain." This hope is not uncertain, it's substantiated. It's not a hope that rests on your fluctuating feelings, but a hope built on Jesus' promises to you. Your sure hope of your heavenly home will confidently proclaim itself through your life. For example, when you face the difficulties and trials of this life, your attitude will be, "This too shall pass by." You will instead look earnestly toward the eternal glories waiting for you. Fix your thoughts on Jesus. He made you members of his home.

You know, after this past week, I think we've all learned a lesson about winter storm warnings. When the meteorologist says that we might lose power, and that we could lose water supply, then we might listen, and fill the tub with water, and buy groceries, and firewood, and batteries, and make sure we have a contact number in case we need help. There will be potential problems in your life. Hold fast to the hope that is in Christ Jesus. It will be your confidence and courage, especially when....ice storms hit and you lose power and water for a week, when the economy is in the tank, when job security is not so secure. Hold tightly to Jesus' promise: you are a member of God's house. When the temptations of Satan and the hardships of this world drag you down, fix your thoughts on Jesus, your Great High Priest who made you a part of his house. Fix your thoughts heavenward, where you will live in his home forever, with a body that will not wear out or be tired, where you will live in a home that will not be assailed by ice or damaged by falling trees, a home where you will eat from the Tree of Life and drink water from the River of Life and live forever. Fix your thoughts on Jesus and your eternal home. Amen.

*In His Service,*

*Pastor Paul Horn*

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