

April 2, 2021  
Good Friday  
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INI - SDG

# Return To The Cross

**Hebrews 4:14-16** <sup>14</sup> Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

What does this mean? "He passed through the heavens?"

Perhaps the writer is referring to the fact that Jesus ascended, and thus passed through the heavens. If so, it would be a reference to his glory.

Some Christian cults would have you believe that Jesus moved from one part heaven to another, signifying a new age among his believers. There is no reason to believe this in this passage or in any other.

Or perhaps the writer is referring to his incarnation. Jesus passed through the heaven coming down to us on earth. This would certainly fit with the next verse, which talks about his being tempted in all points as we are, in short it discusses his humiliation.

Regardless of what the writer meant in this verse it is clear that Jesus did come down through the heavens on a journey. A journey that ended at the cross. A journey which he made to meet with us.

The cross of Christ is the crossroads where God came to meet us, and so we are called this afternoon to return to the place where God is waiting for us, return to the cross.

## **Return to hold fast to our confession**

We are so easily lead astray from our confession in Christ.

Like the hobbits in Mirkwood we wander away thinking we see something better over there. When we get there, we find that it does not really satisfy us so we wander off towards another light, another party, another thing we think will satisfy us, but again and again we are let down. The whole time we are wandering farther and farther from our confession, from the cross of Christ.

We do this even in church, thinking I know that. I want something different, something more exciting. We wander from the cross and before we realize it, we have lost sight of the cross.

In the children's book "Are You My Mother" the little baby bird falls from his nest and goes wandering every which way looking for his mother. Are you my mother? Are you my mother? But as he wanders looking he only ends up farther and farther from the one place where his mother is waiting for him. He can never find what he is searching for until a "snort" puts him back in the nest. There is his mother.

We so often get bored sitting at the cross of Jesus and go wandering off looking for our God in other places. But it is not until Christ picks us up and puts us back here at the cross that we find God.

This is a confession worth holding onto Jesus died for sinners, Jesus died for me.

We have a high priest who came all the way down through the heavens to meet us at the cross, says the writer. Let us hold fast to this spot, knowing what grace, what glory, what forgiveness he brings to us here at this spot.

We hold fast this confession. We take our stand here. We shall not be moved. Jesus died for me.

### **Return to the cross for sympathy in our weakness**

The word translated here weakness (ἀσθενεία) is often translated sickness. It is much more than simply a difficulty standing or a light headedness. it is a disease that has invaded our entire being and completely cripples us.

He sympathizes with our weakness because he has gone through worse than we have. He has gone through worse because unlike us he would not give in to temptation. He knows exactly what we are going through and can sympathize with us.

Whatever we have gone through he has gone through. He knows, he understands.

When I was young my father would always ride his bike every morning. When day I wanted to go with him.

"You won't keep up." He said.

"I will"

"I'm not going to wait. I'm not going to turn around."

"I'll keep up."

Of course I didn't keep up. And of course he did turn around and come back for me.

Christ always come back for us. He always turns around. He does not leave us behind. He understands our weakness.

So often we hold up our lives and to our own eyes they look rather good, but they are garbage. Nevertheless, at the cross of Christ we know that we can hold up those self portraits and instead of being beaten down with how terrible we are, we will find a sympathetic high priest.

A sympathetic high priest, one who will say, well done good and faithful servant. Not because our lives are really that well done. But because he knows our sins and has forgiven us, by his blood.

Return to the cross for a sympathetic high priest.

### **Return to the cross for help**

In verse 16 we are told to come boldly to the throne of grace. What is this throne of grace? Where is it that Christ sat to give out the free gifts of God, namely the forgiveness of sins? This can be no other than that cross itself. We return to the cross to find grace and mercy and help.

This word help, is the same word that is used in Acts 27:17.

**NKJ Acts 27:17 When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven.**

This is not just a little help. This is not someone gives us a few dollars when we need a meal or helps us prepare for a job interview or says something encouraging when we are a little down.

This help is more like a full body hug. When the ship is in danger of falling apart because of the storm you wrap it in iron bands or rope or whatever you got to keep it together. This is the type of help, when our whole life is about to fall apart God wraps us in the iron bands of his love to keep us together and bring us through the storm.

This is the type of help that comes swiftly. So much of the help of this world comes slowly and often arrives when it is too late to really do any good. When I was a missionary, often people overseas would ask for help. I would go back to the Mission board, a year later I would be back to Africa, talk to them some more, go back to the mission board again, maybe two years later I would come back with help.

But this is not that type of help. The sailors did not twiddle their fingers and dawdle when the boat was in danger of coming apart. They ran and brought help quickly. So too is the help we find at the cross of Christ. It is strong and it is swift.

Return to the cross to find the help we need.

Today we return again as we do every Sunday, and as we ought to do every day, to the cross. To the only place where we are able to meet God. To the one whose "appearance was so marred, beyond

human semblance, and His form beyond that of the children of mankind” (Isaiah 52:14). “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). To the one whom God chose to crush, the one who bore our sins.

We return to the cross to the place where he died, but where we find grace and sympathy and help and above all forgiveness of all our sins.

**Amen**