



## SERMONS THAT WORK

### Wednesday in Holy Week

#### Journeying

**[RCL] Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 70; Hebrews 12:1-3; John 13:21-32**

Hebrews is something of an anomaly among New Testament writings. It tells of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, but it's not a Gospel. It appears to be written to a particular community of faith, but it's not a letter in the traditional sense. It is very much concerned with our lives of faith, including eschatology, but it's not an apocalypse, nor is it a history.

All that is known of Hebrews is gleaned from reading between the lines, and when we squint just right, we find a community of faith that is in trouble.

Here we find a congregation that was once on fire for the work of the Gospel—baptizing, sending out, teaching, preaching, serving, giving, all in Jesus' name. Their worship was once lively and inspiring; their community bound together in mutual respect, love, and service; their vision united in expectation of the triumphal return of Christ.

But now?

The Sunday School children are now married with children of their own; the young families group has grandchildren; and those who once taught the children to sing "Jesus Loves Me" have themselves taken their place in the company of saints and angels.

If this doesn't sound familiar in the contemporary church's hearing, pay closer attention.

Hebrews is a community that is in despair, and their pastor is doing everything imaginable to restore at least a modicum of hope, to ignite even the faintest ember of faith in their weary souls.

It is in this context that we must hear the soaring poetry that begins the twelfth chapter: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding

its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.”

Sometimes in life, the simplest reminder is also the one that can save our life: We are not alone.

Even when the only way out is through, we never walk alone because we are joined both by the saints who walk the way with us in this life, and those who have already taken their place in the next.

For Christians, this is the week that is the end of all weeks. We stand today at the precipice of the holiest three days of all, as we journey with Jesus from the Last Supper, to the cross, to the tomb. And ultimately, we travel onward to meet the Risen Lord on Easter morning.

Be forewarned, beloved: This journey is not for the faint of heart.

But this journey is for those whose hope has been hushed; whose faith is burning down to its last embers; whose despair at the weight of the world has caused them to search for something new—something different.

This journey is not one we take with our minds only, nor our hearts only, but with our selves, our souls, and our bodies.

This journey bids us come on our knees, nourished by God’s own body and blood, as we see in death the promise of eternal life consummated in the risen Jesus.

May we who are called to this journey embark with the assurance that we are not alone. In fact, we are joined by that great cloud of witnesses who guide us along the way, so that, at the last, we find our home in Christ.

Amen.

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