

**“Humble Trust in the Unchanging Christ” + Hebrews 13:1-17**

**12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost + Sunday, August 28, 2022**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

**“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (v.8). How can this be said of Jesus? After all, Jesus came into this world of ours, and this world is full of change! Jesus Himself started out as a little baby in His mother’s womb. He was born and grew up from an infant to a toddler to a boy to a teenager to a man. The Bible says He “grew in wisdom and knowledge and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). The Gospels record how Jesus, being the genuine human being that He is, while in His state of humiliation, did grow and change. But through all of this He was and is the eternal Son of God. The text is speaking about Christ according to His divine nature. We can be sure that the same Son of God who agreed before the foundation of the world to sacrifice Himself for the sins of the world is the same Christ who was born, lived for us, died for our sins, and rose again from the dead. He is the same Christ who is with us now and lives and reigns to all eternity. What could be better news? The work of Jesus has not failed, the promises of the Savior have not run out, with the power of an indestructible life He lives, true God and true man, always pleading our case before our Father in heaven.**

**This verse about Jesus comes in the middle of these instructions about the Christian life. The inspired author cannot speak for long about the Christian life without speaking about Christ Himself. Let’s keep in mind the unchanging gifts and promises of Jesus Christ as we take a look at these instructions for the Christian life. What does it look like to live a life of humble trust in this unchanging Savior? In this last chapter of the Book of Hebrews a whole bunch of topics about the Christian life are addressed, one right after the other. Let us take a quick look at ten aspects of a life of humble trust in the unchanging Christ.**

**1. Let Brotherly love continue (v.1).**

**Jesus is our Lord and Savior. By being baptized into Him, we are made part of His family. That means that He is our Brother and through Him we are all adopted as children of the heavenly Father. This relationship ought to**

**characterize our life together in the Church. We are brothers and sisters in Christ, not strangers, not foreigners. When you look at the person next to you in church, look at them with one eye on the unchanging Christ, who has made you family with him or her.**

## **2. Show hospitality to strangers (v.2).**

**But our love and care for others is not just to be among fellow Christians or members of this congregation. He says, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2). In the olden days there were very few inns or restaurants, and people traveled everywhere on foot. It was very important to share with strangers as they each went their way. It was part of helping your neighbor in every physical need. They needed food and lodging and you provided.**

**There are still many opportunities today to be kind to people whom we may never know. Verse 16 is similar: “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” (Hebrews 13:16). When we share with others out of the bounty that God has given us, we are simply giving back to Him a portion of what He has given to us. Jesus speaks of this in the Gospel reading: “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” (Luke 14:12-14). It is verses like these that give me great joy as I thank God for the produce we have been able to share with various food pantries.**

## **3. Remember those in prison (v.3).**

**A life of humble trust in the unchanging Christ also includes remembering those who are in prison: “Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body” (v.3). Verses like this have moved the Southern Illinois District of our Church to send chaplains into the state and federal prisons and county jails. This also challenges us to support and pray for those who are being**

persecuted for their faith. Persecution of Christians is very intense and some countries of the world.

#### **4. Honor marriage (v.4).**

A life of humble trust in the unchanging Christ also includes following His will for marriage. He taught us: “A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife. They are no longer two, but one. But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:6-9).

Here it says it this way: “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous” (v.4). God has intended a special love to be enjoyed only by husband and wife. When we try to grab that gift outside of marriage, we are mixing in something foreign and polluting the pure gift that God intended. A humble trust in the unchanging Christ places ourselves under the authority of Christ to follow His will for marriage, not our own or the will and ways of so many around us.

#### **5. Trust God to provide all that you need (vv.5-6).**

How easy it is to worry! But God’s promises will not fail. You can trust the unfailing, unchanging Christ: “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’” (vv.5-6).

#### **6. Remember those who taught you the word of God (v.7).**

If you have had faithful people in your life to teach you the word of God, remember them! Thank God for them! How blessed we are if we had parents who put their trust in the unchanging Christ, who spoke to us the word of God. How blessed we have been if we have had faithful parents and sponsors and friends and teachers and pastors. We are blessed today because of the faithful

**lives of many who are no longer with us. They demonstrated what it was like to live as sinners forgiven by Jesus Christ. We have seen “the outcome of their way of life.” Many have taught us how to die in the faith as well as how to live in the faith.**

#### **7. Let your faith be strengthened by grace (vv.9-10).**

**We are warned against false teachings, which always point us to man’s efforts instead of to Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. Diverse and strange teachings may sound attractive to us, because they seem to bring to us something new and interesting, something that flatters us and our sense of self-righteousness. But God calls us to be “strengthened by grace,” to present ourselves to God as condemned sinners in order to receive the free, undeserved gift of the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.**

**On that line there is mentioned an altar from which we eat. The Lord’s Supper is called the “Sacrament of the Altar” because here we received the benefits of what Jesus accomplished on the altar of the cross. There are some who have no right to eat of this meal: “We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat” (v.10). From the context of Hebrews we know this refers to those who were still hanging on to the old covenant, those still trusting in the ceremonies described in the Old Testament, which were temporary, like a tent.**

#### **8. Bear the reproach of Christ (v.13).**

**Jesus was put outside the city walls of Jerusalem when He was put to death. It was meant as a sort of further humiliation of Him, as if to say: “You are garbage and do not belong with us in the city God gave us.”**

**But the author points out that this merely shows that Jesus was fulfilling the sacrificial system that pointed to Him. He was like those sacrifices offered on Jewish altars. After the meal was enjoyed by the various parties, the remains of the sacrifice was taken outside the camp and burned up. Jesus endured the fiery wrath of His Father against our sin, the sin He bore in His body. He endured that derision from people. Now He calls us to keep faith in Him, even when people exclude us.**

### **9. Offer up sacrifices of praise (v.15).**

Through Christ we offer up sacrifices, including a “sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name” (v.15). When we come into God’s house and open up our lips, we are offering a sacrifice to Him. We are responding to Him with songs of thanksgiving and praise for all that He has done for us. We sing with “lips that acknowledge His name.” That is how it works in worship: God gives to us, and we respond back by praising Him and acknowledging His name. That is why I hope that, even if you feel you cannot sing, you will still open the hymnal and read the words to make them your own. Our singing is a matter of the heart, a matter of faith, and not according to the musical ability of the singer.

### **10. Be persuaded by the word of God from the Pastor (v.17).**

Finally, we read: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” This is a very sobering word to pastors: we are going to have to give an account of our work. But your job is to be persuaded when the Pastor preaches the word of God. If he is just speaking his own opinions about various outward matters in the church, his word is worthy no more than anybody else’s. But when he tells you what God says, you are to listen.

**Christ never changes! These descriptions bring to mind our failures. Take them to Christ, confess them, receive His forgiveness. His promise has not changed! Amen.**