

Prayer of Preparation: *Zion is calling me to a higher place of praise. To stand upon the mountain and to magnify his name. To tell all the people in every nation that he reigns. Zion is calling me to a higher place of praise. Speak Lord, tell us about your kingdom which cannot be shaken. Amen.*

Paul continues talking about faith: where we receive our faith, who our faith is based in, and where our faith is taking us. Hebrews is a foundational letter, one which attempts to reach a group of people who are as different as different can be. Paul is attempting to bring people from different backgrounds into one room and have a conversation with them to explain to them that they are people of faith.

Like any good teacher Paul starts at the beginning of their journey, but Paul's overall message is this: everything you have and everything you are is based on your faith and on the faith of your ancestors. Faith in God who took Abraham and Sarah from their homes with a promise to bring them to a land overflowing with milk and honey and children...more children than the stars.

Paul provides the Hebrews a list of how God has loved and guided them throughout their history: how God has sent prophets, how God has sent kings, how God has sent kings judges, how God has sent leaders, how God has sent men and women who heard God's call to become a people set apart to worship God in spirit and in truth. And, how God's people failed.

Because we all fail. We will all fail if we are left to our own devices. We will fail and spend a countless amount of time trying to do it on our own when God says lean on me, when God says listen to me, when God says set yourself apart and become a part of me...and when God sent Jesus, born a baby in a manger to become Emmanuel, God with us, and who we should follow.

We're almost at the end of Hebrews. Paul is almost done...but Paul still has a few more things to share with us. First, Paul shares that we are at the place our ancestors dreamed of. A place where salvation is at hand. A place where heaven and earth meet. A place where we are the kingdom and the kin-dom...we are at the place where we can choose to receive God and God's gift of a living relationship through Christ Jesus. Yet it's a place we can't touch with our hands...because if it were in our hands, we'd find a way to break it into pieces.

We've come to a place where we are God's own and because we are God's own, we have a special relationship with God. We are God's own because we choose to be, because our faith has taught us this is where we should be, and because of the example of our ancestors. **We are God's own.**

We are God's own. That's what Paul is impressing upon the Hebrews and us. We are God's own. We are the people who follow Jesus. We are the people who have inherited our faith, we are the people who have been adopted, and we are the people who have become people of faith. We are the people of faith who have faith. And we are the people who will pass on our faith to our children, to our families, and to our communities.

We are the people who will be resurrected, just as surely as Jesus was resurrected, into a new life in heaven. We are the people who will create a small corner of heaven here and live in heaven in the future. We are the people who will greeted by *"innumerable angels, the assembly of the firstborn, God, the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and Jesus."* An unshakeable place...home...heaven.

Paul reminds the Hebrews that while they are scattered throughout the world, while they have been removed from their homeland, while many have *never* seen the temple in Jerusalem, this place is not their home. This place will never be their home. Their home is in heaven...a place of unshakeable peace. A place of unshakeable joy. This place is not our home either. We have inherited their faith and because of that, their promises are our promises. So we will inherit a place where we will meet all our family and friends who have

died in the faith. A place where we will join the communion of saints. A home that cannot be touched with human hands. A place where our souls will rejoice forever. The place we all long for...our home in heaven.

Paul reminds us of the promise...we have a faith that is untouchable. We serve a God who appears to be untouchable. We serve in hope in a world full of injustice which appears to not know mercy. The promise is home. It is our faith which will lead us there.

Response to the Word: *Zion is calling me to a higher place of praise. To stand upon the mountain and to magnify his name. To tell all the people in every nation that he reigns. Zion is calling me to a higher place of praise.* Gracious God, send us out of this place with the strength of our ancestors faith so that we too may be greeted by angels in the city of God. ***Amen.***