Authentic Because of the New Covenant

We all know the expression ‘the grass is greener on the other side’. A lot of times we use that expression to convince ourselves to move in a different direction:

- A new job
- A new degree choice
- A new neighborhood

And often times when we do this, we realize the other side, really isn’t any better. The change, really doesn’t make a difference- it doesn’t bring us the happiness or peace we thought it would bring.

This morning, we are going to spend some time talking about the good life. The expression, ‘the grass is greener on the other side’ really is true of Jesus.

The book of Hebrews showcases this more clearly than probably any other book in the New Testament. It was actually the aim of the author of Hebrews. His aim was to demonstrate the superiority of the New Covenant over and beyond the Old Covenant. In the Old Covenant, grace was promised. In the New Covenant, salvific grace was administered. It was accomplished.

Listen how the author of Hebrews builds this case:

Hebrews 10:4 “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” (Hebrews 10:4 ESV)

“And by that will [the will of God] we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all.” (Hebrews 10:10 ESV)

“And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly he same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:11-14 ESV)

“Where there is the forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.” (Hebrews 10:18 ESV)

The author of Hebrews is telling this struggling, Hebraic church that Christ is superior. It has been said that you can’t appreciate the book of Hebrews without an understanding of the book of Leviticus.

All the tedious and gruesome sacrifices made to temporarily cleanse the people of God pointed toward the Lamb- the spotless, perfect Lamb of God whose sacrifice once and for all removed the stains and guilt for all of God’s people.
Christ is superior. The grass really is greener on the other side. When we herald the good news of the gospel, that is what we are telling people.

We are saying, ‘what we have is better than what you have. What you have is withering and dying. What we have is evergreen.’

And this morning, maybe some of you are have lost focus on this good life. And you’re settling for those things that will be scorched at the Lord’s coming.

So, this morning let’s examine what this good life looks like. This is our second week on Authenticity, and I am asking the question,

“What is an authentic, blood bought Christian concerned about? What occupies her/his thoughts?”

Let’s read together the focal point of this morning’s sermon, then I’ll pray and make some observations.

Main Text

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:19-25 ESV)

I. An authentic Christian draws near to God because of the blood of Jesus.

We see this in verses 19–22. Authentic Christians are dedicated to drawing near to God, not out of religious obligations, not because that is what we are told we are supposed to do, but because the Holy God of the universe allows us to have an audience with Him.

We have an opportunity to enjoy the presence of our King. Before Judaism passed away, there was a placed in the Temple called the ‘Holy of Holies’ which contained the Ark of the Covenant. It was the place God’s presence dwelled. Only the High Priest on Yom Kippur could enter into the ‘Holy of Holies’ and before they did so, they had to make atonement for their sins through the sacrifice of animals. This was a gory, intricate process.

When Christ died, making atonement once and for all for our sins, Matthew 27:51 says “the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom…”
Jesus is our High Priest. Jesus made it possible for us to enter the Holy of Holies. In fact, because of Christ’s sacrifice, the Holy Spirit lives in us. There is no physical place we need to go in order to commune with God. We do not need some sinful, fallen priest to go on our behalf to God. Jesus, our high priest granted us the ability to draw near to God.

Just press pause and think about that for a moment. The sacrifice of Jesus means we have communion with our Holy unapproachable God. In fact, in Christ we may approach God. We may draw near to Him.

I want to ask you a question this morning: “Are you happy to draw near to God”? Authentic Christians find communing with God to be the delight of their lives.

- Speaking to Him in prayer
- Confessing your sins, your worries, your anxieties- casting those upon Him
- Pouring over the words He wrote to You so that you may know Him and hear from Him

Is it your delight, your privilege, your desire to draw near? Do you find rest, peace, and happiness when your soul spends dedicated time with the Lord? Do you realize and feel the weight of this precious gift of fellowship?

Or is drawing near to God dull? Does it feel like a hassle? Would you rather spend time with someone or something else?

Authentic Christians draw near to God and it is their joy.

II. An authentic Christian aims to increase their assurance of faith.

That’s verse 22 and 23:  

22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:22-23 ESV)

Can I confess to you--there are times I don’t feel saved. There are times I doubt my salvation. And I’ve found several different things in my life to be the culprit:

- Unconfessed sin

David experienced this after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed:

32 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
  whose sin is covered.
2 Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
  and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
  through my groaning all day long.
David’s felt as if his bones were wasting away. His strength was dried up. Until he confessed his sin to God.

Hidden/unconfessed/unrepentant sin will make us miserable and decrease our assurance of faith.

- Suffering has decreased my assurance of faith

This is what those in the Hebraic church were experiencing. There were suffering immensely at the hands of non-messianic Jews. At this suffering cause them doubts. The author of Hebrews reminded them of their suffering Savior who endured.

- A consistent lack of fellowship with God has decreased my assurance of faith

Those times I neglect my time with the Lord. Those times I do not enjoy His presence or speak to Him or give myself the opportunity to hear from Him in His word, I am extremely miserable.

Here are three remedies to increase our assurance of faith:

- Mortify your flesh. In other words, put your sinful desires to death. Crucify them. They were in fact crucified with Christ. Sin deprives us from comfort and joy. If you find yourself in constant turmoil, repent and look to Christ. Theologian John Owen said “Every unmortified sin will certainly do two things: (1) it will weaken the vitality of your soul and (2) it will darken your soul and deprive it of comfort and joy”.
- Secondly, if suffering is decreasing your assurance of faith, remember that God did not spare His only Son from suffering. Jesus Christ suffered and endured and by doing so, gives you the grace to suffer and endure. Meditate on your suffering Savior. Memorize and store God’s Word in your heart.
- Commune with God regularly. He is the delight of your soul. Speak to Him, read His word. Again, draw near.

So, an authentic Christ seeks to have his or her assurance of faith increased.

III. An authentic Christian has a tender consideration and concern for others.

Authentic Christians are ‘others focused’. Most of the time when I counsel people, this is a tremendous blind spot. Sometimes we are so focused on ourselves that we don’t leave room to be concerned about others.
We had staff retreat this week for the staff at Coastal. And one of our leaders here at Coastal, Kevin Smith challenged us to leave white space in our weekly calendars for other people. That was convicting for me to hear.

Do I organize my calendar in a way to make space for the last-minute needs of people- to be there for people? Does my mind and calendar have time for those whom Christ came and died for?

Are you making time for the people in your home? Are you making time for the people in this church? Are you making time for your unbelieving neighbors and friends?

An authentic Christian has a tender consideration and concern for others.

IV. An authentic Christian motivates others to love and serve people.

The author of Hebrews says, “stir one another up to love and good works”. Are you invested enough in this local church that you’re motivating those around you to persevere? God gave us each other as a means by which we may

V. An authentic Christian is committed to the local church.

VI. An authentic Christian numbers his/her days.