

## Sermon Draft

**Text: Hebrews 2:1–13 (14–18)**

**Sermon: “Therefore”**

“Therefore” is a great word for starting our Epistle because it lets us know that what is read is based on what has been said just a chapter earlier. And the preceding chapter, the first chapter of Hebrews, starts, ***“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son”*** (1:1–2).

In that first chapter, Jesus is distinguished from the prophets as the culmination of their life and message. This week’s therefore includes Jesus’ being Savior and God: ***“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”*** (1:3). By the order of creation, and the order of redemption, Jesus is in all things God, speaking among us in these last days.

And then we hear of a class of nonhuman created beings: the angels. Angels are praising God in heaven and are God’s servants as he pleases (1:14). But they are not human beings; angels are angels.

When our believing loved ones go to heaven, they do not become angels, even though they are ***“with the angels.”*** Our Savior, once made lower than the angels, is crowned with glory and honor, “at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

All of this is comprehended by the first word of our text, therefore. Yes, the unbroken message of the prophets from God’s call to God’s Christ. Then, the glory of the angels bows to the majestic glory of a Savior. Such is heaven’s providence. As the angels looked upon the earth, they, who had never known a Savior of their own, saw God himself making purification for the sins of the dwellers of earth. As he rose to the right hand of the Majesty on high, they looked upon him, they his subjects, and continue to sing their unbroken praise for this mystery of divine, crucified love for fallen humanity.

It is the greatness of this salvation which is the heartbeat of our text and so we’ve heard, ***“How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?”*** (v 3). The salvation given by Jesus, our Savior, if our greatest treasure and is neglected to our greatest peril.

The picture behind the word neglect is the picture of water in a river being observed flowing by. But as it flows, we do not engage with it to quench our thirst, wash our skin, or fill a jug for later. We simply remain observers, and it flows by.

There are many times when neglect in some form helps us live life. Someone brushes our elbow in a supermarket aisle as they pass by hurriedly. We think of it for a minute, then let it go. They were in a hurry. Back home, a banana has a bruise we would rather not eat. We cut it out, and enjoy our banana, not even counting the bruise by the time it's finished. Such easy neglect helps us get through the day with fewer worries, understanding that a fallen creation has its brushes and bruises and that there are things far more important to life.

Our world is an awfully busy world. International instabilities, political games, the effects of disease, and places where crime seems to be out of control are the stuff of daily news, creating a sense of daily crisis. Society aside, we think of our families.

Even if all these societal troubles ceased, there would remain the full-time job in our family of cultivating love, caring for one another, recognizing our responsibilities and roles, loving sacrificially, and practicing repentance and forgiveness toward one another.

Even if you or I were the only person on earth, we would find a state of war within ourselves, where the old sinful nature would fight the new redeemed person we are, and we would beg God to increase in us true knowledge of him and his will and true obedience to his Word, to the end that by his grace we may come to everlasting life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

This alone would be a full-time pursuit. In reaction to all of this, we may find that we neglect some things in life, not because we should, but just to take the pressure off us. We might well declare a few days free of hearing or watching the news. We tell our loved ones we need time to ourselves. We may find ourselves neglecting our relationship with God and taking refuge in things he has forbidden.

Neglect is a reality, but less likely a sustainable solution. Apparently your or my propensity to neglect even important things isn't new to us or our spiritual ancestors. The existence of Hebrews 2 lets us know that this choice also attracted at least some of the Hebrews for whom this book was written.

Think of this: the magnitude of neglect is determined by the importance of a thing we may choose to neglect. Ignoring a snide remark is wise neglect. Neglecting our bodies may be lethal. Neglecting our home and family may damage more than just us and be hard to repair. But, much worse, Scripture surmounts all such things when God asks us to consider, ***“How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?”*** (2:3).

Notice the word escape. We are talking of escaping just retribution: judgment. And it's a significant ingredient in understanding the great salvation many neglect.

In our text, verse 2 says, ***“For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution.”***

As Law, ***“just retribution”*** tells us we are destined for punishment. Our sins and our sinfulness all require it because justice is involved, and we have been passive and active sinners. Because God is good, God is just: he punishes sin. He plays no favorites, pulls no punches.

It is comforting that there is retribution for sin, and that it is just. God’s justice is good; he is not fickle. He is dependable in punishment, so we know where we stand and that what is right and wrong, as part of truth, does not change across the ages. Unless there is a purification, a salvation, a just escape from the just retribution, dear friends, we own the retribution, and it’s coming at the Last Day.

We find many examples in Scripture sufficient to show us God’s message declared by angels. The cherubim of eastern Eden forced the banished Adam and Eve to look not back to what could have been but forward to believe God’s statement to the serpent in the Garden of Eden. There would be one, born of woman, to crush the devil.

The angels who met Abraham in Genesis 18 brought the Lord's promise to return and that Sarah would have a son. This son of promise would bear sons until the Messiah of promise was born from this line. As Jesus was born to be our Savior, angels would announce threefold (to Mary, Joseph, and shepherds) his incarnation, and after attending him while in agony, they would hail his bright resurrection, declaring the message thereof to all who sought the living among the dead.

This message was greater than retribution. It was one of being saved from retribution. Of escaping punishment. Throughout the Old Testament and the New, angels proclaimed the message and person of the Lord Jesus Christ, truly as his ministering spirits, showing him to be greater than his created beings and victor over even the angel who was once of their own ranks but who, by sedition, sought to be like God.

Therefore, there is escape from just retribution, we have a great salvation to celebrate!

What makes this salvation “such a great salvation” is a God who loves us, who gave his only Son for us, whose blood paid our price for sins committed, whose blood cleanses us from all sin, whose blood set us free to be people of God. Salvation’s greatness does not lie in us; if it does, it lies in our inabilities and Jesus’ supreme abilities for our benefit.

The greatness of salvation is that God took note of our sorry situation, hapless attempts at holiness, and careless Christianity, and simply loves us. He saw doubt, fear, and worry in our soul, and pitied us with a Father’s love. He saw us stray and felt our neglect of him, and he truly wanted better for us. The greatness of salvation is God, in majesty, loving us, in misery, and becoming our great salvation.

With one person, two intersected beams of wood, three nails, and four Gospel writers, he made our salvation a reality.

It is greater than our sin and our sinfulness. It is greater than all we face this day or, if God wills, tomorrow. It is greater than every charge the accuser could lay against us on the Last Day, for in this salvation, our names remain written in the Book of Life.



It is greater than doubts, greater than fears, greater than cancer, cardiac arrest, or yes, COVID.

We may find ourselves tempted to neglect God's best gift in good times or in difficulty. Though the tempter is already judged, he likes to keep busy, seeking to imperil our souls. But God has built joy into his great salvation. When we find ourselves guilty of neglecting it, the process of confessing and receiving forgiveness centers us in the restoring work of the cross, and the care of the crucified. It brings back to us the appreciation and greatness of our salvation because it brings us back to our Savior. Therefore, rejoice always in Christ Jesus.

Amen