

Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25

¹¹And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, “he sat down at the right hand of God,” ¹³and since then has been waiting “until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.” ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. ¹⁹Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us approach 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. ²³Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

I believe each of us wants something from our experience in the church. There may be many answers if we were to question each other about what that might be. But, I believe at the bottom of them all would be the assurance that we are good, that we are acceptable to God; that we have nothing to worry about. And, I also believe, that at the bottom of it all, when we are honest with ourselves, we each harbor the notion, and the fear, that we are none of these things.

We hold these thoughts close to ourselves fearful of embarrassment, condemnation, or rejection. We do so and in the process suffer from our own judgment which is invariably harsher than we deserve. None of us are as bad, or as good, as we believe ourselves to be.

Fortunately for us, our judgments, about ourselves or others, don't amount to a hill of beans. God's judgement through Jesus Christ is all that matters and God, through God's love and mercy, has found us to be good and acceptable. And because this is so, we need to be encouragers of each other, and those who have yet to hear what we have heard.

Prayer – *O God, make us encouragers of each other and with the new people we meet. The world needs this spirit of compassion and comradery. We need it, too. Amen.*