

Hebrews 13:7-22

Living in the Unshakable Kingdom

Please turn to Hebrews 13

- ❖ Chapter 13 is all about living our lives in a different kingdom
 - What is called here the “Unshakable Kingdom of God” (12:28-29)
- ❖ And as in many of the letters of the NT
 - At the end, the author tells his readers the implications of the Gospel he has just explained
 - And Hebrews is no different
- ❖ Chapter 13 calls us to live differently in 3 ways
 - 2 we looked at last week...
- ❖ **A Different Type of Love** **OVERHEAD**
 - Brotherly Love
 - Love of Strangers thru ‘radical ordinary hospitality’
 - Love the Oppressed
- ❖ **A Different Type of Life** **OVERHEAD**
 - A High view of Marriage
 - And a freedom from the Love of Money
- ❖ But there is a third way we are called to be different
 - We are called to live in...
- ❖ **A Different Type of Community** **OVERHEAD**

READ 13:7-17

- ❖ And this different type of community has a different type of leadership

- Look @ v. 7
 - *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God.
Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith*
- ❖ We are to be a community that remembers those faithful leaders in our past...
 - And imitate their faith

Nobody here probably remembers a man by the name of Amos Alonzo Stagg. But I bet if you asked Bill Belichick, he would know.

From 1892 to 1932 he coached football at the University of Chicago. They were the original Monsters of the Midway, long before the Bears borrowed that name. For decades during and long after Coach Stagg's heyday, you couldn't go too far on campus without bumping into his influence. Not only did he lead the Maroons to two national titles in 1905 and 1913, but he invented such things as the huddle, the onside kick, the T-formation, the end-around, and the forward pass. In other words, he practically invented football as we know it.

And for the last 100 years, whether coaches knew it or not, they have been imitating him because his was such a great football coach.

- ❖ IN the same way, the author is saying here
 - If there are any Christian leaders in your past...
 - Remember what they did well
 - Recall how they lived faithfully
 - And endeavor to imitate their faithfulness to Christ
- ❖ For example...
 - Remember those leaders who finished the race well
 - That is what Paul is calling Timothy to do in 2 Timothy 4:6-7

- *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*
 - Paul is saying to Timothy...
 - I persevered through thick and thin
 - I have finished well

❖ So...

- Who is it in your past that finished well?
 - Who continued to serve the church well into their dotage?
 - Who are the older men who continued to disciple younger men (Titus 2) into their 70's, 80's and 90's
 - I am reminded of Elder Grady Spires who disciplined me during seminary when he was in his 70's!
- Who is it that died well as a Christian?

Musician Michael Card developed a close friendship that led to a discipling relationship when he was at Western Kentucky University with New Testament scholar William Lane. In Card's book, The Walk, describes the intertwining of these two lives that grew out of their days together at the university. Years later through a telephone call, Card learned that Lane was dying of cancer. Eventually, the Lanes moved to be near the Cards. As Card tells the story, Professor Lane had a purpose in doing this. He said to Card, "I want to come to Franklin because I want to show you how a Christian man dies."

- ❖ Who is it who proved the saying, "You can't teach old dogs new tricks" WRONG?
 - Who is it in your past that continued to allow the Spirit and the Word to change them throughout their whole life?

- Who it is that continued to humbly ask the faith community those three most important words...
 - “What do you think?”

- ❖ What about the leaders of God’s people in your past?
 - Who is worth learning from?
- ❖ I will always remember Pastor Alan Christensen
 - Pastored Hope E Free Church in wilton from 1970-1995
 - Front lines of the worship war
 - Nearly split the church
 - He balanced grace and leadership well for me
 - After months of meeting with people and member meetings to discuss, a vote was taken to keep the contemporary service and music. I remember that night he closed the meeting by coming to the pulpit. And saying that the congregation had spoken, the direction was set and the discussion was closed. No more discussion, no more gossiping, no more divisiveness, discord or disunity. ***And if there is anyone here who cannot abide by that, maybe this is not the church for you anymore.***
 - I will never forget that
 - He modeled Patience, and Grace and Strength and Leadership
 - And I have always sought to imitate that

- ❖ But we are not just to look back...
 - We are called to imitate the present leaders & elders God has put in your life

- ❖ Paul said it twice...*Follow me as I follow Christ* (1 Cor and 2 Tim 3)
 - He is telling the Corinthian church and Timothy to...

- Imitate his conduct, his aim in life, his faith, his patience, his love and his sufferings
 - Literally saying...
 - As I am like Christ, Imitate me

❖ And that is what you should do as well

- You should look at your elders and examine their lives for ways in which they can be a model for you

DA Carson talks about a young man he knew while in college named Dave. Dave was a bold evangelist on the campus. Carson recalls that one time a young man challenged Dave that he was no different than he was. He came from a stable family who loved each other, did good in the community.

"So what have you got that we don't have?" he said.

Dave looked at the young man for a moment and said, "Watch me. Move in with me. I have an extra bed. Just follow me around. Watch how I behave, what I do with my time, the way I talk. You watch me, and at the end of three months you tell me there's no difference."

The young man didn't take Dave up on that offer, but he did keep coming back to watch how Dave lived his Christian life. Eventually the young man came to Christ and went on to become a medical missionary.

Carson says that he learned from Dave challenge that the Christian is saying in effect: "I'm one poor beggar telling another poor beggar where there's bread. I drank deeply from the wellsprings of grace. God knows I need more of it. If you watch me you'll see some glimmerings of the Savior, and ultimately you'll want to fasten on him."

❖ And that is how you should watch your elders

- For glimmerings of the savior

- They are not perfect by far
 - But they do have parts of their lives that are glimmerings of the Savior
- ❖ Henry – Meek, quick to listen slow to speak, humble
 - I personally try to imitate Henry in his sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's work
- ❖ Aaron – Wise, knows his Scripture well, is quick to listen and slow to speak, I stable in his emotions
 - I personally try to imitate his deep meditation of Scripture
- ❖ Marc – Teachable and humble, repentant, sensitive to people's feelings, transparent, Loves God's Word
 - I pray that I will be more like him in how generous he is with his time
- ❖ Ed Noonan will be examined and voted on by you in 2 weeks
 - One of the questions you should, be asking is...
 - Is he worthy of imitation?
 - What areas give me a glimmer of the savior?
 - I can tell you when I look at him, I see a...
 - Sober-minded
 - Self-Controlled
 - Humble, Teachable
 - Hospitable man
 - Who is Disciplined in his time in Scripture & Prayer
 - Someone who is worthy of being imitated
- ❖ And so...
 - As we imitate Christ...
 - Imitate us...Watch us
 - And when we fail...
 - And we will...

- Fasten onto Christ

❖ Because only He is *the same yesterday, today and forever*

- That is what v. 8 is reminding us

- In other words...

- Yes, Imitate your leaders...

- But Never put your faith in your leaders!

- The only one worthy of that is Jesus Christ
- The only one who is perfectly patient
- Who is perfectly quick to listen and slow to speak
- Who is perfectly wise in all situations
- Who is the definition of humility & meekness
- Not only loves God's Word
 - But is the Word incarnate
- Who can be TRUSTED in and with everything

❖ And that trust that you have in Jesus should be reflected in your relationship with the elders that God has put in your life

- That is another aspect of living in this unshakable Kingdom

A Trusted Leadership

OVERHEAD

❖ Look @ v. 17

The Wall Street Journal in an article years ago wrote...

"People want to be lightly governed by strong governments."

That sentence taps into what we've all wanted since we were a small child. You wanted your dad to be big and strong and able to do anything you could think of—except that...when he dealt with you...it had to be with gentleness and tenderness.

In the final analysis, people want to be lightly governed by strong governments because that's how God governs. The omnipotent ruler of the universe is also the one who says,

“A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.”

Lots of muscle; lots of restraint.

- ❖ And that is the rare combination what God calls his church into

- ❖ Church is not an Autocracy - Pastor led
 - This is borrowed from the business community
- ❖ Church is not a Democracy – Ruled by the many
 - This is borrowed from our system government
- ❖ Church is not even an Oligarchy – Ruled by a few
 - Elders in a church making every decision

- ❖ The Church operates in a unique space...
 - A loving family and a living organization blended together
 - And how it operates is on TRUST

- ❖ First...
 - The Trust given to the Elders by God
 - And elder in Christ's church must understand that he has been given an authority ***entrusted to them by God***
 - That is implied by the words 'Obey' and 'Submit' here
 - Paul told the elders at Ephesus
 - *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God*
 - Later, Paul writing to Elder Titus said...

- *Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you (Titus 2:15)*

❖ There is a ministerial or ecclesiological authority given to the leaders of God's church in Scripture

- Otherwise "obey" and "submit" make no sense here
 - An elder's authority extends as far as the Scriptures and no further
 - Where the Scriptures speak...the elders speaks with authority
 - Where the Scriptures direct...the elder directs with authority
 - Where the Scriptures corrects, admonishes or rebukes...
 - The elder corrects, admonishes and rebukes with authority

❖ But this authority must be handled with incredible Humility

- Peter writing to the scattered churches wrote...
 - I exhort the elders among you, ...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:2-3)
 - Exercise authority in a non-domineering way

❖ I really like how Hywel Jones put it in his commentary...

- It is not a domineering intrusiveness into people's lives, which denies Christian liberty and discourages Christian maturity, but a paternal care which gives people help when needed in running toward the goal, so that they do not step off track and drop out of the race
 - That is a good definition of watching over your soul right there
 - Giving people help when needed in running toward the goal

❖ Sometimes that looks like...

- A shoulder to cry on
- Sitting with you during difficult times
- An encouraging word
- Listening to you talk through issues

❖ But it also means

- Sometimes challenging someone's thinking or interpretation
- Speaking more truth than grace
- Warning someone that they are off track
- And eventually disciplining someone when they are in unrepentant sin

❖ And what gives elders courage to do such things?

- Elders are going to give an account to God for the oversight of your souls
 - Elders will answer to God for the care they give
 - And that should both temper their hubris...
 - As well as encourage their care

The Congregant

❖ So there is a humility and trust that God gives to the elders

- But there is also a humility and trust that the congregation gives to the elders

❖ John MacArthur

- Just as church leaders are to rule in love and humility, those under their leadership are to submit in love and humility
 - In other words...
 - TRUST your elders
 - That's what those two words we hate to hear in v. 17 are communicating...

- Obey your leaders and submit to them...

- Trust your elders

❖ 1 Thes 5:14-15

- We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work
 - Trust your elders

❖ Stuart Olyott wrote...

- Recognize them as leaders, by submitting to their teaching at every point where it is Biblical, and by being open with them about everything that bears upon the welfare of your own soul and the welfare of others in the church.
 - Living in this unshakable Kingdom calls for a different way of life
 - And part of that is Trusting your elders
 - Choosing to believe that what they are doing in the church and in your life
 - Is not a power grab
 - Is not an attempt to control you
 - That they are not impinging on your freedom
 - That their motive is not bad

❖ Trust is choosing to believe that the elders have your best interest at heart

- And a really good diagnostic question to ask yourself is...
 - Do you believe that the elders have your best interest at heart?
 - Do you believe that...
 - The elder decision to stop that ministry is in the best interest of the body and the Gospel?
 - Do you believe that...

- The elders encouragement for you to do something is in your best interest?
- Do you believe that...
 - The elders choice of teaching or preaching is in your best interest?
- Do you believe that...
 - The elders admonishment in your life is in your best interest?

❖ Do you believe that the elders have your best interest at heart?

❖ As J. Leeman in an article called “Authority: God’s Good and Dangerous Gift” writes Good authority doesn’t just work from the top down, but also from the bottom up. (Good authority says) Let me be the platform on which you build your life. I’ll supply you, fund you, resource you, guide you. Just listen to me.

Good authority binds in order to loosen, corrects in order to teach, trims in order to grow, disciplines in order to train, legislates in order to build, judges in order to redeem, studies in order to innovate. It is a teacher, teaching, a coach coaching a mother mothering. (Authority in the church says) trust me, and I will give you a garden in which to create a world...I love you

❖ Do you believe this?

- The flesh recoils at this...
 - But the soul flourishes in this environment

In his book Up with Authority, Victor Lee Austin uses the analogy of an orchestra to help us understand a little about how authority and trust work together.

Orchestras need conductors because the musicians don't have a single right answer to questions like, "What should we play at the concert?" or "What should we practice

today?" or "How should we interpret this passage?" Each musician might have a perfectly reasonable opinion, but their opinions will inevitably be different and will almost always be incompatible with one another. And it's no good for each musician to do what is right in his or her own ears. It won't do for the brass section to insist on playing a one musical piece if the strings have chosen to play a completely different piece. If the orchestra is to perform coherently, if the musicians want to perform music rather than just make noise, somebody has to have authority to decide.

By submitting to the authority of a conductor, individual musicians attain musical expression they could never realize individually or even as a collection of free-wheeling players. Authority is necessary for classical musicians to bring musical fulfillment to others. In the words of Victor Lee Austin, the conductor's authority yields "a greater degree of human flourishing than we would have from the musicians separately or individually."

- ❖ And when good, non-domineering authority is met with Trust...
 - Then 17b occurs
 - The God-given work of an elder becomes a joy and not a burden
 - And you begin to flourish in that environment

Lastly and briefly...

Living in this unshakable Kingdom requires a different type of worship

A Christ-Worshipping Community

OVERHEAD

- ❖ That's what the author is reinforcing for the last time in v. 9-16
 - We are to worship Christ and Christ Alone
 - Charles Surgeon
 - I believe a very large majority of churchgoers are merely unthinking, slumbering worshipers of an unknown God.
- ❖ That should not describe us!

- We are to be very intentional about being a Christ-Worshipping Community!

- ❖ This section with all its allusions becomes clear when we keep in mind the main purpose of the letter
 - To warn and encourage a group of Jews who have become Christians not to return to Judaism to avoid the pressures of persecution

- ❖ And in this final section he is warning them not to be led away by diverse and strange teachings
 - Then...
 - Goes on to talk about foods and altars and sacrificial animals
 - About High priestly duties and the Holy places
 - He even makes reference to inside and outside Jerusalem
 - And the Tent/Tabernacle
 - As we read this it becomes clear that the strange and diverse teachings author is speaking about is Judaism!

- ❖ In other words...
 - Since Christ, Judaism has become a false religion!
 - Since Jesus Christ, all the trappings of Judaism have lost their meaning!

- ❖ Since Christ...
 - The foods (v. 9)...the Kosher diet is of no spiritual value
 - We are now a people separated from the world
 - a spiritual house...as Peter writes...to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices
 - Like those found here in v. 15-16
 - Of, Good works and Generosity, Praise to God

A youth camp pastor was missing his son Noah at home. He asked if the kids would be willing to gather around his cell phone and sing to his son. The kids gathered and sang his son's favorite song over the phone. After hanging up, he told us nothing could have made him happier than that we sang to his son.

That is how God the father feels when we sing and pray praises to his son Jesus Christ!

❖ 2nd, Since Christ...

- There is no more Holy Place (v. 11)
 - Just holy people
 - When we gather here in God's name, it is a holy place
 - Otherwise, just a large room

❖ Since Christ...

- The priestly role is done away with (v. 11)
 - We now have a high Priest in the order of Melchizedek
 - Who does not offer up bulls, goats and lambs...
 - But himself

❖ Since Christ...

- No more animal blood needs to be spilt & spattered for the forgiveness of sin (v. 12)
 - Because Jesus gave his own blood, saying...
 - "This is my blood which is given for the forgiveness of many"

❖ Since Christ...

- There are no more animals need to be symbolically sacrificed for sin(v. 11)
 - Because Jesus gave his own body
 - Once and for all
 - He substituted his body for ours
 - He took the penalty of death on himself

- That is what we are reminding ourselves when we institute the table by saying, “This is my body given for you”

❖ You see...

- He suffered outside the gate
 - So that you could be brought in
- He bore the reproach & blame...
 - So that you do not have to
- He died outside the city...
 - So that we might live forever inside one
- He was separated from God...
 - So that you and I never have to be!

❖ And because of what He has done for us...

- That’s why we praise him, that’s why we sing...

❖ You have heard it said here many times before

- Every really good movie has the Gospel in it
 - And that is why the Lion King is a really good movie

In the animated version

The Lion King has a son named Simba. And in the opening scene the long-awaited announcement of Simba's birth is carried throughout the valleys and plateaus of Africa. Tribal drums and African chants herald the cub's arrival. Elephants, gazelles, antelopes, vultures, zebras, giraffes, gulls, even tiny ants journey to receive the new royalty. They climb hills, descend sloping canyons, forge streams, and hike jungle paths.

Once all the animals all arrive, the infant cub is presented to the gathered subjects. Rafiki, the monkey elder, lifts the newborn high above his head to symbolize Simba's exalted calling. Then a beam of sunshine pieces the clouds and shines on Simba. The

animals go crazy is exaltation and then after a few minutes they slowly herd by herd, begin to bow in reverence.

That's a good picture of how it should be

And as we enter the Advent season next week...

Let us remember this grand picture of who Christ is and what our reaction should be