

In Christ, We see God as our loving Father - Hebrews 12: 18-24

Our meditation for this evening is from the Epistle of Hebrews which was read before especially verses 18 to 24 from chapter 12. Let us hear again these verses: **18 For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest** **19 and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.** **20 For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."** **21 Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."** **22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,** **23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,** **24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."** Here ends the text for meditation.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen
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Dear Christian Friends:

The Scriptures from the beginning to the end teaches us about Jesus Christ. We learn in the Bible that Jesus calls us to be listening disciples and believing followers. We learned how God has made it possible for us to be caring people and faithful witnesses. We learned why we are to be a joyful people. But the most important lesson we learn from Jesus is a lesson about the nature of God and His love for us, for while many people see God as an unapproachable king and judge, in Christ we see God as our loving Father, who cares about us and invites us to come to Him and receive the blessings of love and forgiveness He offers us in His Son.

Hear the story of two children who asked their fathers the same question. The first child asked his father: **Daddy what is God like?** The first answered to his child: Well, God is a God of justice. He has given us His commandments and wants us to obey Him. And if we do not obey Him, then we are sinners, He punish us sending us forever in hell. The second child asked His father the same thing: **Daddy, what is God like?** This father had a quite different answer. He said: God is love, and in His love for us He sent Jesus to take upon Himself all our sin and guilt so that we might live with Him in heaven forever.

Friends, believe it or not, both fathers were talking about the same God, and both told their children the truth. The difference was that one father saw God as he had learned to know Him in Christ, while the other father saw God without the light of Christ. And that is an important difference. Without Christ, God can be very intimidating. Without Christ, God appears to us only as a God of wrath and justice, who must deal with our sin according to His divine law. And that can be a frightening prospect. That is the lesson we learn from the first part of our text.

In these verses we are taken back in time to Mt. Sinai, the place where God came to the people of Israel as they began their journey to the Promised Land. It was at this

mountain that God displayed His awesome power before all the people, and it was here that God came down to them to give them His commandments to guide them in their lives as His people. As they camped at the base of the mountain, Moses instructed the people to build a fence around the mountain, for God had commanded that if anyone, even one of their animals should so much as touch the mountain, they were to be stoned. And then God came down to His people. We are told: It came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him with thunder. We know how we feel when the sky becomes black and the harsh thunder storms of summer roll in. But that does not begin to match the feelings of these people when they saw this awesome display of the Lord's power and might.

Our text tells us how they reacted - they were frightened. When they heard the Lord's voice in the thunder they did not want Him to speak again, for they did not think they could bear it. Even Moses, who had been in the presence of God was awed by the sight. It was not God's intention to frighten the life out of His people, but to remind them that He is not a God to be trifled with, but He is to be regarded with respect and awe and reverence, and that those who defy Him by their lives will have to face this God when He stands as the judge of all mankind..

But this is not the way God reveals Himself in Christ. Through Christ, we do not see God as an unapproachable judge, but as a loving Father. John tells us that Christ came to make God known to us and that in Christ we see the glory of God, full of grace and truth. And Paul says: God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

As our text points out, we have not come to Sinai to see God in His terrible power, but we are told: **you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.**

Instead of the terrors of Sinai, we come to the festal banquet prepared by the Lord in Christ. In Christ, God has dealt with our sin according to His justice. Christ has done what we could not do, what the people at Sinai could not do - He has fulfilled the law for us. In His death and resurrection, Christ has taken upon Himself the full punishment that we deserve because of our sin and disobedience, and set us free that we might live as the redeemed people of God. And He teaches us this very important lesson - God is a God of love, mercy and forgiveness, who will bring us to the glories of His kingdom, to gather

with the angels in heaven and with all the saints in eternal praise to God, whose love for us has saved us from sin, death and the eternal torments of hell.

One day a little boy visited his aunt, and he was intrigued by a colourful wall motto which had the text: **Thou, God, seest Me**. Noticing the interest of her nephew, she took the motto from the wall and began explaining to the child. She said, "Some people will tell you, that God is always watching you to see what you are doing wrong, so that He can punish you. I do not want you to think of this motto in that way. Every time you read these words, remember that God loves you so much that He cannot take His eyes off you."

Friends, Christ makes all the difference in our knowledge of God. Without Him God appears unapproachable. Without Christ we cannot know the love of God, for we cannot know His forgiveness. But in Christ we learn that God is approachable, that He loves His people and forgives them for their sins when they repent. He is watching over us, not in order to catch us in some sin, not in order to condemn us for our disobedience, but to be the help, comfort and strength of His people through all of our lives. No longer do we have to be afraid of God or His anger.

Oh, His law which was given to His people at Sinai is still valid and He expects us to be obedient to that law. That law reminds us how far we fall short of the glory of God. But in Christ, God sets us free from the condemning power of sin and the law and gives us the power we need to live as His people, not out of fear of punishment, but in grateful thanksgiving for His love - the great love that led Him to give His own son so that we might be forgiven and live with Him forever.

We have been brought to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. For our fellowship is most of all with the Godhead. There is no exclusion of the Holy Spirit here, since anyone who is with the Father and the Son is with the Spirit as well. We have communion with this Holy Trinity even now, but will enjoy it fully in the kingdom to be revealed, when we see God face to face.

This is a far greater joy than anything else we could imagine. All other blessings pale in comparison to the reconciliation we have received in Christ Jesus. He has brought us back to our Father in a perfect relationship, since we are declared righteous and perfect in Him. We are sprinkled with His Blood so that no wrath from God remains on us.

Our father forgives us our sins for Christ, which cleanses us from all our imperfections and evils, the sins that still cling to us and behind us in fulfilling the will of God. This can be done because the righteousness of Christ is sufficient to compensate for all crimes. If Christ were still in the grave, then our hope would be in vain; but with the risen Christ exalted at the right hand of God, we can be courageous in faith.

So what is God like? I know that for me, God is not some mean deity who wants to spoil all my fun in life. I know that He is not an angry, hateful God, even though that is the exactly the way I deserve to be treated by Him. But He is my loving Father, who cares

for me, and someday He will take me to be with Him forever in heaven, to join in the great celebrations enjoyed by the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.

Friends, if you really want to know what God is like, learn the lesson that Jesus teaches us - God is a God of love, who forgives those who trust in His mercy for the sake of Christ. Amen

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord, and Savior. Amen.