

Come Boldly

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NLT)

So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

The God of the universe, Creator of all, the Great I AM invites each of us to approach the throne with boldness. The first time I read that I was amazed and yet somehow puzzled. How could I, the worst of all sinners, approach God's throne – and with boldness at that? How assumingly audacious!

I always imagined myself standing before God, but with my head tilted down, eyes on my feet, unable to look into His face because I'm so unworthy. But through the years as I've walked closely with the Lord and studied this scripture more deeply, I've come to realize that it is because of Christ's life, death, and resurrection that I can approach the throne. Not just approach the throne, but approach it courageously, because His throne is a throne of grace, and our High Priest, Jesus, sits at His right hand, interceding for us.

So do you hear Him? He's beckoning you into His presence. Calling you into His mercy and grace. His arms are outstretched, patiently waiting.

In the story of the prodigal son, the father stands, always waiting and watching for his child to come home to him. And when he sees his son, the father runs to his child and embraces him with joy.

Can you see Him? God the Father watching, waiting anxiously to embrace you as you enter into His presence? Strength and power like no other, yet tender and soothing ... a comforter. There is peace in His presence.

Thank you, Lord, that you call us into your presence and you ask us to come just as we are. Loving Father, help us to have child-like faith to trust you as we sink ever more deeply into your arms and rest in you.

*Christina Maddalone, Assistant Pastor
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Where one man reads the Bible, a hundred read you and me.

D. L. Moody

Deep and Wide

Ephesians 3:16-19 (NIV)

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

As children we would sing the song, “Deep and wide, there’s a fountain flowing deep and wide.” The Bible tells us how deep and wide God’s love is for us and there is no end. As deep as the deepest ocean ... higher than the heavens ... His love for us is greater. No matter what difficulties we may be facing, or wrongs we have done, God loves us and He is always with us.

There is nothing that can separate us from His love. We may be facing medical problems, financial difficulties, relationships that need healing, unemployment, or other challenges. But what a comfort it is knowing God’s love for us will provide a way or carry us through whatever difficult situation we are facing.

The past three months our family has had several medical problems. But knowing God’s love, we could face each one with faith and trust. Paul, my son-in-law, had major cardiac surgery, an aortic aneurysm, and a leaky valve. My son, Barry, had two seizure-like episodes. My grandson, Alex, had back-to-back concussions. In addition, I was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease.

Many prayers were lifted, and God’s love – so deep and high and long and wide – has brought us through. Everyone is doing well. Paul is back to work, Barry retired in December, Alex is back into sports, and medication is helping me with my symptoms.

God continues to provide and care for us each and every day. God’s love is always with us, and we praise God and are thankful for all He has done.

Dear Lord, we are ever so grateful for your never-ending love for each of us. It’s hard to grasp the depth of your love. Create in us the desire to share your love with your children. And to you we give all praise and glory. Amen.

*Trudy Jenkins
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A Simple Seatbelt Lesson

Psalm 86:11 (NIV)

Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

I recently got into my car and was in a hurry to get to my mom's house, which is only a short distance from mine. I deliberately decided not to wear my seatbelt because, I reasoned, by the time I put it on, I would be there. On my way I heard an annoying "ding, ding, ding." It was the seat belt alarm in my car reminding me of my negligence. I just ignored it and thought, "I'm almost there. Be quiet." I did what I had to at my mom's and went on my way, not thinking much more about it.

A short time later, one of my husband's friends was hit head-on. His mother, who was with him, was killed. She wasn't wearing her seatbelt. I suddenly remembered when I had recently not worn mine and said, "Thank you, God, that I didn't get into an accident that time."

It then dawned on me how often God tries to warn me about things that I know I am supposed to be doing. But sometimes I just ignore Him or I think, "I don't have time right now, I'll do it later." And then, of course, later never comes or it's eventually too late. Sometimes I intentionally avoid what He's trying to tell me, while other times I just don't take the time to slow down and listen to what He's saying. Like the seatbelt, God just wants to protect me and keep me safe.

So I've decided to always wear my seatbelt. And I'm trying harder to slow down and listen when God is trying to warn me or just speak to me. I don't want to miss His message and then look back at my life and regret it because I wasn't paying attention to His leading.

Father, forgive me for the times I ignore you and think other things in my life are more important than you. Let me listen when you speak, and then obey.

Diane Sizemore

Trinity United Methodist Church

A little girl was busily drawing a picture. When her mother asked her what she was drawing, she answered, "I'm drawing a picture of God."

"But no knows what God looks like," Her mother chided. The child's answer was bold indeed. "Well, they will when I get done."

Lent and Our Righteousness

Romans 3:24 (NKJV)

Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Job asks the ancient question in Job 9:2, “Truly I know it is so, but how can a man be righteous before God?” As we go through Lent, I have been thinking about the part of righteousness called justification.

In the first five chapters of Romans, Paul explains the concept of justification. A basic definition of justification is God’s activity in declaring the sinner righteous. It is the action of a judge (God) declaring a prisoner (us to sin) innocent. We can’t do it by our works, by following the law, or by following rituals like the Pharisees. It is a gift from God.

God wants to restore us to Himself. This is one of the bedrock principles on which the entire Gospel rests. It’s God’s grace through His Son Jesus. As we go through Lent toward Easter, we have to accept that we need a Savior.

In the Garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion, Jesus agonized with His Father God over going to the cross. But He went! He made the one great sacrifice at Calvary for our sins. We might give our life to save a loved one, but Christ gave His life for people who made no claim to Him or to righteousness. The wonder of it all is that He died for us – the ungodly and unlovable. Even if we have been dedicated Christians all of our lives, there are times when we have been (or felt) ungodly and unlovable. The good news is that we can know God has declared us innocent. This leads us to peace with God. During Lent we can meditate on God’s grace, which provides our justification and growth in our Christian faith.

Dear God, as we go through Lent, may we remember to read our Bible and study your Word and to pray for your help in making us better people. Help us to do your good in our daily lives.

*Tom Bennett
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The Scriptures were not given for our information,
but for our transformation.

D. L. Moody