

## **Jesus has made the difference**

Text: Hebrews 9:11-14

Before we celebrate communion together, I would like to talk to you about the letter to the Hebrews. One thing I notice when reading the letter is the enthusiasm of this unknown author and my heart too beats faster reading this passage. Particularly when I read the words about what Jesus did for you and me. I would like to share this enthusiasm with you. We can read that God wants to make a covenant with us, and that is nothing new under the sun you would think. We can already read that in the Old Testament, there we see that God went with Abraham and Moses with whom He made a covenant.

In the letter to the Hebrews we see that there is something new on the horizon, namely Jesus, through whom God wants to make a new covenant with you and with me. It is different than in the Old Testament, in the time of the tabernacle, a tent for meetings where God lived.

In The Old Testament God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle and set up in the desert. It was given to paint a picture of how heaven works and how humankind can draw near to God. This was the place where God's people worshiped and offered sacrifices, where priests served, and where animal sacrifices were always being made. Whenever you came close to God - a kid said to me -you always smelled barbeque. It was all foreshadowing the work of Jesus; that which He would eventually accomplish on the cross.

But when we look more closely to this tabernacle, then we see that this tent was divided into two different parts. In the front of the tent only the priests were welcome (9: 2), but there was also a place where only the high priest was allowed to come and no one else. This was the most sacred place in the tabernacle. There, the high priest - ordained by God - mediated the relationship between God and His people, so that this relationship could be restored. The relationship between God and the people was continually disrupted by wrongful acts and disobedience towards God.

So in order to make amends between God and man as well as between people, a sacrifice of atonement was needed. The animals were used to make an exchange; to make it good again between God and man, the animal was used as a sacrifice. This was the only way that could restore the relationship.

God didn't want these kind of sacrifices that people had to do for Him every time. The reason for this was that by sacrificing animals the debt was forgiven, but people did not change on the inside. So it was ineffective for changing the human heart (v.9-10). God wanted precisely that man would change from within and not by, for example, the law imposed from the outside. It is not the outside that counts but it is the inside! Also the tabernacle was inaccessible to the people (Hebr. 9:6-7). The people were not able to come, only one person: the High Priest. You know, God is a God who wants to have contact and a real relationship. This was why God made humans in the first place. The tabernacle gave more distance, rather than proximity.

So the tabernacle was meant to be temporary (verse 8). It was all foreshadowing what God had already planned for humankind.

The Old testament tabernacle stands in the centre of the camp where the Israelites were. It was only a picture, a copy of the real deal. So today, as our minds think about our High Priest Jesus who ministers in a greater sanctuary, which is the very throne of God in heaven, we now come to a fascinating concept here in verse 12. It says "Not with the blood of goats and cows, but with His own blood He entered the most sacred place once for all having obtained eternal redemption.

It says: "With His own blood He entered the most sacred place or the Holy of Holies in Heaven. Get the picture, we know that Jesus left heaven. We know that Jesus left heaven and became a human being and He lived a perfected life for 33 years. He died and shed His blood on the cross and we know that he was buried in a tomb and raised up again. But remember when He was alive, He was talking to His disciples and said: "I am leaving you and I will return to my Father. I am going back to heaven." And now, here in verse 12, we get this amazing glimpse of what happened when Jesus went back in Heaven to His Father; He re-entered with His own blood. He took His own blood with Him and the focus of the rest of chapter 9 is on the blood of Jesus Christ. The word 'blood' is mentioned 472 times in total in the bible and 11 times in Hebrews 9.

So I asked myself again, why is Jesus' blood so powerful?  
For a non-believer, talking about blood is really strange.

Someone asked me why is it necessary?  
Do you know why?

His blood redeems us (verse 12); not with the blood of goats and cows but with His own blood. This immediately makes me think of Ephesians 1:7 "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." "Redeems" means to be bought with a price. It means to be ransomed.

Now back when this was written it was used primarily down at the slave market. Slavery was huge in the Roman empire. If you lived in that time, and you knew a slave, and if you came up with enough money to buy that slave, you could actually buy that person's freedom. That's what Jesus did; He became the High Priest for us, for us all. And sometimes it is hard to believe that God loves us so much that He gave his only Son for us. God loves You and he wants to have contact with You and because of Jesus (He made the difference) the way to God our Father is open! That's what we are celebrating today. Everybody is welcome at His table, everyone. And maybe you are here for the first time in a church. And maybe you do not understand everything that I have said. But know that God is alive and that He reached His hands out to you. He knows your sufferings, your doubts.