

Hebrews 11:13-19 – At Home with Christ

Exegetical Big Idea: All those who have placed their faith in the promises of God have in store for them a heavenly home, namely in Christ.

Homiletical Big Idea: **Christ's resurrection secures our home with him.**

Fallen Condition Focus: Christ's resurrection is the promise of new life at home with him, but we are yet to receive it in full. It is hard to walk by faith!

Background:

The Church is built on the foundation of what happened on Easter. At the cross is the satisfaction of God's wrath. Christ, the perfect sinless Son walked up the hill to Calvary, beaten and bloody, carrying not only his cross but the sin of the world upon him. As he hung there he endured physical pain and insult from those he was dying for.

And then as he breathed his last, he said the words "it is finished". What was finished? All the wrath of God justly poured out for the sin of the world, onto Christ. Christ receiving it, though he himself was sinless. At that moment, God was satisfied. Sin was punished. The penalty of sin paid for once and for all for those who would receive Christ as their saviour.

But the cross was not the end of the story! On the third day, some women were the first to find the empty tomb. Bewildered and thinking that someone had stolen Jesus body, they were met by an angel who asked them that glorious question: "Why do you look for the living among the dead"

Jesus is not dead, he is alive. His resurrection proves that he has defeated sin and death, and for those who believe in him, that same victory is given to us in Jesus' name.

When I think of the cross, I think of God's wrath being satisfied by the sacrifice of Jesus.

And when I think of the empty tomb, I think of the promise of new life.

And for that promise of new life in Christ I want to turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 11.

Intro:

When I was younger my brothers and I were part of the beavers and cubs organizations. I really enjoy the outdoors and camping and probably being part of the Cubs Scouts is where that started. I remember there would camping trips in the summer that we would go on. I remember on time, for whatever reason, my brothers didn't come on this particular trip so I was the only one from my family to go.

We had lots of fun during the day. There were games and friends and campfires. But then night came. I dreaded it. I would lay awake in the middle of the night, everyone else asleep. Dark and alone. I felt panicked that I was in a strange place, without my family. I longed for the comfort of the places I knew. I longed for the comfort of my family. I longed for the safety of my bed.

I longed for home. I was homesick. It happened a lot when I was younger.

I knew I was not where I was supposed to be. I knew I wasn't home.

I want you to be home sick. I don't mean I want to feel homesick when you're camping. I want you to be homesick for your true home, your home in Christ. Every Christian should be home sick. I want you to be home sick because you are not home!

Like all those before us who put faith in the promises of God, we are exiles and wonderers in a land not our own. And like all those before us who have put their faith in the promises of God, our true home, is in Christ. His resurrection secures that.

This Easter I want you to know that the resurrection actually happened, but more than that, I want you to believe it. Because:

Christ's resurrection secures our home in him.

13-14 – We see our home from a distance, but we see it nonetheless!

We're actually jumping into the middle of the chapter here. Verse 13 begins with "these all died in faith..." Who are the "these" that the author is talking about? The author mainly has in mind here Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are who we call the patriarchs of the faith. The verse goes on to point out that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all died "not having received the things promised". So what was promised?

For that we need to think all the way back to Genesis 12. It was Abraham who first received the promises talked about here, and promises continued with Isaac and Jacob. But way back Genesis 12, God called Abram (later renamed Abraham) from a pagan land told him to pack his things and go to land that God would show him. God promised Abraham that he would make Abraham's name great, that he would make Abraham into a great nation, that God would bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse Abraham, and that God would bless the whole world through Abraham. Only a few chapters later God made these promises "official" with Abraham, and promised that Abraham would inherit the land of Canaan.

But it doesn't take us long to realize as you read through Genesis that Abraham died, *not* yet having inherited the land that was promised to him! So did Isaac his son, and Jacob his son.

What went wrong? Is God a liar? Did the promises of God fail? Of course not. There is only one conclusion. The promises of God are not broken by death.

Abraham had to have come to this conclusion. And that's exactly what we read in these verses. Abraham died "in faith", not yet having received the promises, but "greeted them from afar".

What kind of faith is this? It is nothing short of resurrection hope! It has to be! Abraham reasoned that God has power over death.

And so, what does that make Abraham? A wonderer. An exile in this world.

The picture of Abraham wondering in a land not his own, waiting for the promises of God to be fulfilled is the picture of the Christian today. This is not our home. We are in exile. We wonder in a world that is not ours.

But we don't wonder around in vain. The resurrection of Christ is the promise that we hold on to. We see it on Easter Sunday. We get a glimpse of our future as we read of the resurrection of Christ, and meanwhile we wonder in a land not our home.

[Both Alana's and my family live far from us. Both sets of parents have to drive hours for a visit, or we have to drive hours to them. So we love Facetime! If you're not aware of what that is, Facetime is a video call. We can use the phone of the iPad and the kids love seeing and talking to their grandparents. It's great, but obviously, it's not the same as being there with them. A grainy picture on a two-dimensional screen with quite muffled sound is just not the same as being in person. The best Facetime can provide, is a greeting from afar. And as excited as the kids are to talk with their grandparents on the iPad, they are so much more excited when they come for a real visit.]

We read the glory of Easter Sunday and the glory of heaven in the Bible, but we still even see it from afar! We don't know all the details. We don't know what it will look like or be like or smell like.

But we walk by faith knowing that the promise is sure.

Can you imagine what was going through Eve's mind as she received the promise from God that one day her offspring would crush the head of the serpent? She too greeted this promise from afar. She had no idea that it would require God himself to take on humanity and become like those whom he was going to save. She had no idea that this would require a sacrifice. She doesn't even know what a sacrifice is. She doesn't even know what death is yet! But does not knowing all the details make God's promises any less true? Absolutely not.

It is no different for us. Look at verse 14. If you confess the resurrection of Christ, you're declaring that this is not your home, and you are seeking a better one. We are lumped in with Abraham in this. Our home sick state of this world sends a message to the world. That message is that there is more. There is better. There is a true home where we were meant to be when God created us without sin. That home is in Christ. As you and I live our lives not for the glory of ourselves, or the pleasure of this world, we are declaring that there is a better home.

As you and I celebrate and declare the resurrection of Christ to be true this Easter, we are declaring that

Christ's resurrection secures our home with him.

But it's so tempting to love this one...

15-16 – Being at home with Christ, means leaving the love for this one behind.

There is nonetheless a tension here. Verse 15 reminds us of the realization that to journey towards a new home necessarily means saying goodbye to the old one.

Abraham was not called out of a vacuum. Abraham had a life in Ur. His family was in Ur. His wife's family was in Ur. His security and future were in Ur. When God calls Abraham to get up and go to a country that God will show him, he is asking Abraham to leave what he already has and knows, and go to what he does not already have, and what he does not know.

What is it that makes Abraham get up and go? Why not just say to God "Thank you, whoever you are, but I am perfectly fine with what I have now"? Because remember God does not force Abraham to leave his country, he calls Abraham to walk by faith. What is it that causes Abraham to do that?

Faith that there is something better to come.

[When I was younger I remember I used to get lottery tickets from my grandma for my birthday. Now I don't think anyone should play the lottery. It is a foolish habit, but I nonetheless had these tickets. And in actuality I would have been too young to cash them in. But regardless of that. I remember in those days they would announce the winning numbers during the news. Of course I was convinced that I was going to win! But again, of course, I never did. But suppose I did. Suppose the numbers on my ticket matched the numbers on that were drawn. That would have been so cool to a ticket in my hand worth 10 million dollars or something like that. Now, to receive the money I have to cash in my ticket. But maybe I like my ticket. Maybe I like the look of it and the feel of it, and instead of giving up my ticket for the prize, I frame my ticket and hang it on my wall so that I can look at it any time I want. That's foolish isn't it? The ticket is worthless. We can all see that the better thing to do is give up the ticket and instead receive the prize!]

And yet we as humans do exactly that. We trade the glory of worshiping God the creator, and instead choose to worship created order. And even Christians do this! How often are we pulled back into love for sin, and the things of this world, when we know full well God's ways are infinitely better, and more joyful for us.

We're not unlike the Israelites. Remember when they are freed from Egypt, and God parts the sea for them to finally leave the clutches of pharaoh? They safely cross the sea and enter into the wilderness. They have just witnessed God's power in Egypt, and have the promise of their land right there in front of them. And yet how long does it take for their hearts to turn back to Egypt? Not long at all! They start losing faith in the promises of God and the very moments when they needed to trust God the most to provide food and water, they start longing for Egypt instead. They convince themselves that Egypt wasn't so bad, and that they had all the meat they wanted and fresh fruits and veggies.

How is it that they have convinced themselves that life in slavery is better than a life of faith in the promises of God? Because they fail to see the glory of what is in store for them.

Why do I often convince myself that sin and the things of this world is better for me? Because I fail to see the glory of what is in store for me. And if what is in store for me is the presence of Christ, at home with and in him, then what I am truly failing to see is the beauty and glory of Christ himself!

Oh how I need most in my life is my desire and delight in Christ to grow, and my taste for this world diminish.

We're not meant to live in a better Egypt! We're meant to be free from slavery and brought up to the Promised Land. Because the delights of this world are never meant to be the goal. Just like Canaan was never meant to be the goal.

The fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Israelites was never Canaan. Canaan was just the postcard. The real and true promised land was not a place at all, it's a person.

Canaan was just the stand in and a picture of the real Promised Land, a heavenly Promised Land, where God's presence would not dwell in a golden box in the middle of the camp, but God would dwell among his people and we would see him face to face.

[Gospel: Here's what you need to decide today. Is the resurrection of Christ real, and does it bring with it the promise of home with him? If you decide that it's all just a joke, then keep on living life in Egypt and spend your efforts making life as comfortable as possible cause that's all there is.

But if you're wrong, and if the resurrection of Christ did in fact happen, then the offer to be freed from Egypt is before you. You have the offer right now to come to Christ at the cross and give him your sin. At the cross, God's wrath for your sin is satisfied because it is poured out onto Christ. And if you do that, the hope of the resurrection is yours. You have the hope of being raised to life again with Christ, victorious over sin and death, and one day receiving the goal of your faith, being home with and in Christ. It's yours today as a free gift. If this Easter, you hear God's voice calling you, do not harden your heart as you have done all your life up to this point, but receive Christ and the hope of home with him.]

Because it's true! Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, and he is the first fruits of those who believe in him. I love that picture of being the "first fruit". It's the picture of the first of the harvest to be brought in. The idea is of trusting God for *more* harvest! We are that more harvest. Since our home is with Christ, and in Christ, then we go where Christ goes. Since Christ was bodily resurrected, we will be too. And not resurrected to an earthly city, but verse 16 promise us that we are promised resurrection unto a heavenly one.

I love what the writer adds here in verse 16. "God is not ashamed to be called their God". Of course he's not ashamed, because he's the one to both make the promise *and* carry it out to completion. If it were up to us, there would be plenty of opportunity and reason for God to be ashamed.

But it's not, look at who is preparing the city. God himself. We are not responsible for building that city, as if on some level it is up to us to make these promises come to pass. It is God himself.

And if it is God who is making this promises come to pass, then they are sure, and infinitely better than we can ever imagine.

Christ's resurrection secures our home with him.

17- 19 – There is no other way to be home with Christ, than by faith in his resurrection.

If it is true that Christ was raised from the dead (and it is). And if it is also true that Christ's resurrection secures for his people an eternal home with and in him (and again it is), then the question we need to answer is *how* this is all received?

The answer is found more than 20 times in Hebrews chapter 11, and is found right at the beginning of verse 17: "By faith..." There is absolutely no other way to receive the promise of God in the resurrection of Christ than by coming to him by faith.

Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is our example of that here. You likely know the story. Sarah had Isaac at an impossibly old age. She was old and physically unable to have children, and yet God miraculously caused her to conceive a son. What was so special about their son Isaac? Well it was through Isaac that the promises of God to Abraham would be fulfilled. Remember that God had promised Abraham that he would turn his offspring into a great nation, and that someone would come from Abraham that would be the Blessing to the entire world.

But in Genesis 22, God tells Abraham to take Isaac up to the top of a mountain and offer Isaac as a sacrifice to the Lord. This is mind-boggling. But Abraham nonetheless trusts God and does exactly what God commands. They go up the mountain and as the two of them reach the top, Isaac is bound and placed on the altar, and Abraham is in the act of going through with it.

Now look at verses 17-18 in our text today. The author highlights the fact that Abraham was called to act in faith, to offer as a sacrifice the very means by which God said his promises would be fulfilled. The clear reality is, if Isaac dies here, then the promises of God die with him. This is because Isaac is the only way to receive the promises of God.

[Think of it like this. Let's rewind to the days when the world was not fully explored yet. And let's pretend that I invite you to go on an adventure with to explore new lands. I've built a big boat like one of those pirate ships you might have seen in movies. I've got boxes and boxes of food and barrels of water, enough to last the entire trip. I've hired a crew to sail the boat, and everything else we might need is ready to go. On the morning of our departure, we head out to the dock to sail off and explore. But when we get there, we go out to the pier, and there is no boat in sight. As we look closer to where the boat is supposed to be, we see just the very top of the mast sticking out of the water. The boat has sunk. How does our adventure look now? Are we still going on our adventure? No way! This is not just a minor setback. The boat itself was the only way we were going to sail out. The boat was the *means* by which we were going to explore. No boat, no exploring. It's that simple.]

Isaac is that boat! There was no backup plan. No second child, and no more would come. If Isaac dies, the promises of God die too.

So why does Abraham go through with it!? I would be tempted to say to God "sorry, I don't think you see your logic here God. Let me offer you my opinion on this". That's not what Abraham does though is it. Abraham raises the knife.

Why? Look at verse 19. Abraham trusted in God's ability to raise the dead. Abraham trusted that death was not enough to stop the promises of God from happening. And Abraham was right!

Figuratively speaking, the writer of Hebrews tells us, Abraham did receive Isaac back from the dead. Isaac was marked for death, but was spared. Just as Abraham had his arm raised to make the sacrifice, God stopped him. God provided instead a ram for the sacrifice. The ram became the sacrifice, to die instead of Isaac. In that way, in a figurative way, Isaac was brought back from death.

It's so interesting when you see that the word used for "figuratively" here is the word "parable". Literally it reads "by parable" Abraham did receive Isaac back from the dead. You know what a parable is, it's a story that didn't actually happen, to teach a truth.

The whole story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is in a sense a parable! That story is a parable of Easter. It's not the only one in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is filled with parable after parable of Christ. All of it points to Christ. And on Easter weekend, we don't just get another parable, we get the real thing.

On Easter weekend, it is the True Father who sacrifices his Son. But whereas in the parable, the Father is stopped and the son is spared, in the true story, the Father does *not* relent and the Son is *not* spared.

And Christ is not spared so that those who would believe in him and be covered by his sacrifice would be resurrected! Not in a parable sense, but in the real sense.

Isaac was marked for death, and he was spared. Jesus was marked for death, and he was *not* spared, so that you and I, also marked for death, could be spared and instead gain eternal life at home with Christ.

That's what the resurrection of Christ accomplishes. And that, is only received through faith.

God called Abraham to act in faith, and God calls us to do the same today. Will we respond in faith that this is not our home? Will we believe that though we only greet it from afar, the promise of home with Christ is nonetheless secure? Will we walk by faith to reject this world in exchange for a home that is infinitely better? Will we believe in the resurrection of Christ, the only way to receive him.

If we will, then we will stand with Abraham and all those who through all of history have trusted in the promises of God, and receive the goal of our salvation, being home with Christ.

Christ's resurrection secures our home with him.