

The Sacred Place

by Jim Cymbala

The throne of grace is a spiritual place where we can receive mercy and grace from God to help us in our time of need.

Duration: 29:57

Scripture: Matthew 7:7, John 3:16, Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 10:19-22, James 4:8

Topics: "Sacred"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of all scripture being inspired and significant. He mentions that while there are verses about the role of a deacon, they are not as important as the verse about God's love for the world and the sacrifice of his son. The preacher then reads from Hebrews 4, highlighting the significance of having a great high priest in Jesus and encourages believers to hold firmly to their faith. He concludes by discussing the concept of the throne of grace, where believers can boldly approach to receive what they need through God's love and forgiveness.

Transcript

All scripture is inspired and all scripture is important. How many agree, say amen. But then there are verses and then there are verses.

There are verses about the role of a deacon in the Bible, in Timothy, 1 Timothy. That's important, but that's not as important as for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. Would we all agree on that? All important, but this, for we believers, I can't think of one more important than this, for we believers.

Might be equally as important, but not more. We're reading from the book of Hebrews, chapter four. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus, the son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

Now let's just stop here. Notice real quick, notice real quick, the focus is not on Jesus as savior who died on the cross. That is covered in Hebrews, obviously.

But now, since he died, he rose again. Then he ascended into heaven and now Hebrews is the book best of all that tells us that he is our high priest representing us to God the father even while this meeting is going on. Praying for us, he lives to make intercession for us.

Watching us, ready to help us if we'll just look to him. So this is a picture of Jesus not just on the cross or risen from the dead on the earth. This is what he is now, his ministry is now in heaven.

The writer to Hebrews, which no one knows who that is, we have a high priest who has entered into heaven for us. He not only was the sacrifice, he's the priest. So go back, for we do not have a high priest.

What does a priest do? He's the one who represents you to God who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet he did not sin. So what it's saying here very quickly just to get us to the main verse is that this high priest we have, even though he's the son of God, because he was on earth and lived here, he was tempted, he was assaulted, he cried, he was rejected, he was hated. He knows all the human conditions, but without sin.

So he empathizes with our weaknesses. We don't have someone up in heaven who's God who says, I don't know why you fail and why you mess up so much. No, we have a high priest who knows what the battle is like when Satan comes at you, who knows what the attacks are of the enemy and the human condition.

He has sympathy for us. Did you know today before I get to this, look at me, everyone, Jesus knows everything you're going through right now. He knows everything.

There's nothing hidden. There's no pain. There's no heartache.

There's no ache that your heart goes through that he doesn't know. He knows everything. If your family's turned against you, if you have attack of fear at night when you try to go to sleep, he knows everything and he's not mad at you.

He loves you. We're his children. Can we all just put our hands together and thank God for such a great high priest.

It's personal. It's personal for him, which now leads us to a therefore. And whenever you see therefore in the Bible, you say wherefore.

In other words, what came before it that now the writer is deducing. So let's look. Therefore, let us then, or therefore, let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence or boldness so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Say that verse with me together. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us. Something about that verse.

Confidence is translated in other ones boldness. It means freely speaking like you would to your father or your mother, holding back nothing. The invitation is now come on, but don't come like this.

Come like this. Come boldly. Because of what Jesus has done on the cross, we now have access to God's presence and we're to come boldly, speaking freely whatever we're going through.

And finally, at the end of that verse, and find grace. Notice the two things. Receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

And some of the more literal translations have it like this. So that you'll find God's grace or help or strength given to you just in the nick of time. Just when you need it, he will give it to you if you come to the throne of

grace.

Now New Testament Christianity, the Christian religion, is unlike the Old Testament religion of the Jews and any other world religion in that it has no sacred places. There are no sacred places for the Christian. We make pilgrimages to nowhere.

The Old Testament, the temple in Jerusalem was a sacred site. They even remembered stones and rocks where Abraham was buried and all of that. The religion of Islam, people are making pilgrimages to Mecca.

Even under the Roman Catholic system, especially in the Middle Ages, they're celebrating the Protestant Reformation under Martin Luther that began with Luther. The 500th anniversary is this year in Germany. And in 1517, he wrote this protest against what he saw being done in the name of the Pope and the Roman Catholic system versus the scripture.

And he started a revolution. But one of the things that led Luther to that is a pilgrimage he made to Rome. Because if you went to Rome, if you went to the Vatican, if you went to the famous church there, if you walked up on your knees on the steps, certain steps that were there, those were all holy things.

Those were holy sites. And you got some kind of merit before God if you did those things. When he went there, he saw such corruption and drunkenness and tawdry living among the priests and the people who were leading the religion that he went home totally smashed because he was a legalist and didn't understand God's grace, but he was sincere.

And he knew that's, I went to Rome to get help from Rome. He said, I'm paraphrasing, but now I've seen a wickedness that I didn't know existed, which then got him going about what is Christianity. But New Testament Christianity, there's nothing sacred.

No physical place is sacred. Do you ever notice in the writings in the book of Acts, no one ever made a trip back to Calvary, never mentioned again the hill that Jesus died on, wherever it might be. It's never mentioned that anybody said, come on, we're getting a tour bus.

We're going to Bethlehem. We gotta find that manger where he was born. Not even mentioned.

He was born, that's it. Thank God he came, but the site doesn't even matter. Where he died, oh, the tomb.

We gotta find the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Never even mentioned. No one even talked about it.

Why? Because God is alive. We don't have to go to places. We have access to him right now.

Come on, everybody clap your hands. God is alive. His spirit is alive.

So we don't go to sites. There's no special land in Israel or in the Bronx or in Trinidad or at any place else. There's no special site.

There's nothing special about this building. You can pray to God here in a few minutes and you can meet God, but you can pray on the number three train and meet God just as much. Am I right or wrong? And we don't have to go to a physical high priest.

We don't have to go to the church to get help. We can call on Jesus. He is our helper 24 seven.

So now what is this verse? Hebrews 4.16, which is when people ask me to sign a book I wrote or sign their Bible, that's one of the verses that I most often write in under my name because it means so much to me. It means more to me today. What does it say? It says, don't go make a pilgrimage to a place.

Make a pilgrimage with your heart to a spiritual place, which is called the throne of grace. Everybody say that. The throne of grace.

Say it again. The throne of grace. The writer is saying, come believer with your problem.

Come to this place. Notice we're not there all the time. Otherwise it wouldn't say, let us then boldly approach the throne of grace.

You don't live at the throne of grace, but you can visit and the godliest, happiest Christians visit there the most. It's called the throne of grace. Other people have called it, spiritual writers, the place of prayer.

Notice what's transacted here. Come to the throne of grace that you might receive. Receive what? Mercy and grace to help you in your time of need.

Notice what Christianity now becomes to us. Who are the strongest Christians? The ones who receive the most. Because everything we need, we have to receive from God.

If you agree with that, say amen. Notice what it says here. Mercy and grace.

There's nothing else that anybody else needs here in this building from God, except mercy and grace. We'll explain that in a second. That's what you need.

Mercy and grace to be a happy, healthy, joyful Christian. Mercy and grace. But notice, you have to receive it.

So who have been the best Christians over the centuries? The ones who get the most from God, obviously. Jesus said, without me, you can do how much? Nothing. So who are the best Christians? The ones who get the most mercy and grace.

And then we look at them and say, wow, look at that. Look at that sister there. She's so strong in the Lord.

No, she's only strong in the Lord because she got her strength from the Lord. She's not strong in herself. She has no strength in herself.

You don't, I don't, no one has it. In the flesh dwells no good thing. So who are the strongest Christians? This is now hitting us here.

It's the ones who receive the most from God. And where's the only place that you can receive? At the throne of grace. This then indicates something amazing that Jesus, who'd never needed mercy, he would spend, I was reading in my devotions the other day, he spent the whole night before he chose the 12 disciples, he spent the whole night in prayer.

Could you please tell me what Jesus, the son of God, needs to pray all night for? Could you please tell me? He had nothing to repent of, but he needed grace, God's help, God's strength, because he was human, yet God. And in his limited state as a human, he needed help just like we do in these areas of God's strength being made perfect in us. So now let's sum this up here because I wanna pray with you.

I don't wanna just give a dissertation on the throne of grace and then never act on it. Let's not be hearers of the word only, let's be doers. How many say amen? Amen.

So now as we draw this to a close, we have this thing of when you come to the throne of grace, what does grace mean? First of all, God's throne is not a throne of judgment. God does not want you to draw near to him so that he can whack you today or me. How many are happy for that? It's a throne of what? Grace, which is God's love in action, God's unmerited favor, unmerited.

Whatever you get at the throne of grace, you don't deserve it. It's not a throne of a transaction. I give you this, you give me that.

No, it's a throne of receiving through God's love what we need. It's a throne of grace. And since he already paid the price for us to have our sins washed away, the Bible is now telling us come boldly now because the battle is not over.

Are we going to heaven? Yes. How many are planning to go to heaven with me in the choir? Lift your hand. How many have had their sins washed away? How many have been born again? Okay, but that's all great.

But now how about the daily struggles? How about the daily battles? How about the attacks of the enemy? How about the structural weaknesses we have in ourselves? You know, one guy is always gonna be tempted to go back to crack. He's not interested in pornography. He doesn't wanna steal anything unless he needs the money to buy crack.

Another person would never even touch crack. They're full of racial prejudice. And that's the thing that just, they get angry, they're always agitated.

They got an edge. You just talk to them, you know, right under the surface, whether they're white or black, there's something going on. They are on the edge.

They can even be sweet. Just say the wrong thing and they will turn sour like the sweet and sour chicken you can get at a good Chinese restaurant. But they wouldn't touch crack.

That's not their thing. Nobody can look down on another because we all have our own weaknesses. How many recognize we all have our own weaknesses, right? Pride, envy, strife, pornography, whatever.

So now the Bible says to Christians, the first thing you can get when you come there is mercy. Why would we need mercy? We're already Christians. Because we need mercy.

Because we mess up. Because we sin. We could tell a lie.

We could gossip. And the minute you gossip and slander about someone who's not present, if you're really a Christian, the Holy Spirit will grab ahold of you and give you one little shake. And say, what was that about? That hurt me.

He lives inside. Now, to get back to fellowship with God and to have that channel clear and not to be bothered by condemnation and guilt, you can actually be a Christian and feel estranged from God because sin, when it festers in the life of a believer, don't say that can't happen. Of course it happens.

Otherwise, why would we need to receive mercy? Mercy, when we come and we confess, notice, unlike grace, which we're gonna learn about, this is instantaneous. Mercy is instantaneous. You don't have to work on mercy.

You're either forgiven or you're not forgiven. And the moment we confess our sins, for if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. When we've messed up, I don't care how little, how bad.

I don't care how many times. If we're wise and we obey the Spirit's wooing and the Scripture's instruction, you come to a place of prayer and you get to the throne of grace and you say, Lord, I am wrong, forgive me. Don't you remember as a kid when you told your first lie and you violated your conscience? Or the first time you just, my wife tells me that when she was little, one time, she wouldn't mind me saying this, she's sanctified now, but back then she wasn't, she pushed a little girl down in school just to show that she was big.

And then she felt that terrible thing, why did I shove that little girl? But we're like that. And some of those things cling to us even after we're Christians. Am I talking to all angels? Why am I getting a no amens here? Aren't you like me? You have a crossword with your wife or your husband.

So you have to go to the throne of grace to receive fresh mercy. It's not that you're not a Christian, you have to keep the channel clear and the only place you can get that done is at the throne of grace. You must go there.

I must go there. The greatest Christian must go there, every choir member. If you have to go there 10 times a day, go 10 times, two times a day, one time a day, 20 times a day.

But Lord, please forgive me, I'm wrong. And instantaneously, no matter what the devil tells you, your sins are forgiven. Come on, your sins are forgiven.

Can we say amen? You don't have to beg them. You don't have to make promises of what you're gonna do. Don't do that, don't do that.

That's a bad road. Just say, I'm wrong, forgive me. And in his mercy and his love, what father wouldn't see his sincere child come to him and would say, no, I don't care you say you're sorry, I'm still gonna be mad at you for the next 30 days.

No father would do that. So we receive mercy. Maybe some of you here, as we get ready to close, that's what you need, you need mercy.

Maybe someone's here who's not a born again Christian. Oh, you need mercy. That's how we all got saved.

Choir, am I right? How did we all get saved? We asked God for mercy, am I right? Did we earn our salvation? No, we received it as a gift. We're at the throne of grace. In fact, nobody can become a Christian without going to the throne of grace.

You don't become a Christian by trying to live a good life or by coming to a church. You receive it as a gift when you ask God for mercy. But if you're a believer here today and you feel your heart strangely hard and you have no appetite for the word of God, and you don't even care about church, and you have no

spiritual aspirations, most likely some sin has lodged in your life.

The sin of laziness, the sin of unbelief. And you gotta go to God and say, God, show me mercy, Lord have mercy. You know the great things Jesus did when people just said to him, Lord have mercy.

Yeah, that's it. Remember that story Jesus told about the two people that went to the temple. One was a religious leader and he prayed and said, Lord, I thank you that I'm not like other people.

These other people are so low life. They're so nasty. They're not like me.

And I just thank you I'm not like them. Another man came and he was so aware of his sins he couldn't even say anything, a long prayer. He just beat on his breast and he said, have mercy.

Jesus said, which man do you think was accepted by God, the first or the second? He said, the second one. He had nothing to offer except have mercy. Aren't you glad God is full of mercy? I'm so glad God delights in mercy.

Did you know if you need, listen, if you need mercy today, he delights to give you mercy. Do you think he wants you away from him? Do you think he wants you in condemnation and guilt and afraid to die and afraid of judgment? No, he wants to show mercy. Now watch also that you might receive mercy and find grace.

What's the difference between mercy and grace? Grace is defined many ways as we've seen. But in this context, what it means is God's love and strength being poured out into your life just in the area that you need it. Listen, and it's not instantaneous.

Mercy is instantaneous. This is why it takes time to pray because to receive grace, it takes sometimes waiting before God, asking and letting him deal with things, strengthening our faith so that he can give us what we're lacking as Christians. It's not that we've sinned.

We've already asked God for mercy. But listen, you're in a situation and you don't know what to do. You need wisdom.

What's wisdom? That's grace from God. So you go to God and you say, God, I got this or this, which should I go to? I'm gonna come to your throne of grace because you not only promise mercy, you promise grace. And grace is you helping me in the area that I need it.

So now I'm gonna ask for your wisdom and direction. And God says, I promise when you come to me, I will give you the grace that you need. Let's say you got a situation in your home or on the job where someone is just ugly.

They just annoy you to no end. But you find yourself losing your patience and you find yourself getting angry and reacting against them. That's not like Jesus.

That's not like Jesus. A lot of people who parade around acting nasty and condemnatory of other people, they think they're moral crusaders. They're not moral crusaders at all.

They're just acting nasty. We're to be like Jesus, even if someone slaps us on one cheek. I'm gonna give you a whack, okay, brother? What are you supposed to do now when I do that? No, not shake my hand.

You're supposed to turn the other cheek. There you go. But how many know to turn the other cheek when someone's acting ugly? How many need the grace of God for that? Come on, how many? Well, how about this one? Jesus said, love one another, even as I have loved you.

Who's gonna do that? How can you love people like Jesus loves us? You find grace at the throne of grace. Let's say you're here today and you're getting tired. No one knows it, but inside you're running out of spiritual juice.

Go to the throne of grace. Don't try to suck it up and fight through it. Go to the throne of grace because the Bible says God gives strength to his people.

Where does he give strength? At the throne of grace. You don't have to go to Jerusalem. You don't have to come to 17th Smith Street.

In fact, you can go to church and never go to the throne of grace. You sometimes watch Christian television or I've been in churches where I'm not sure if anyone in the congregation ever made contact with God in the whole meeting. Do you get what I'm saying? They're learning about God like you're hearing me talk about God, but they never actually get there.

And where's the action? The Bible never says, therefore, let us come boldly to the sermon. Let us boldly come to church. No, it says come boldly to the throne of grace.

Since I hit you, let's be friends. You know what happens? Let's say he and I have a little difference because I just whacked him. And let's say there's a wall between us.

You know one of the best ways to solve that is to say, come on, brother, let's go to the throne of grace together. Come on, let's pray. You pray for me, I'll pray for you.

Do you know how God pulls down the walls at the throne of grace? When you're mad with someone, thank you, when you're mad with someone or you have a difference with someone, one of the best ways to overcome it is just to say, come on, let's pray. You can't be angry at the throne of grace. You cannot be mean.

When you think how much God loves you and that he wants to help you, how could you stay mean at anybody? When you realize all that God has forgiven you and me and you're not gonna forgive somebody else, come on. Listen, I've gone there a million times because I need mercy and I need grace. I've been overwhelmed by so many things in my life, I've been overwhelmed by so many things, heart pressures, attacks of the enemy and I found the only place where I can get it all together is at the throne of grace.

Are you with me on this? You understand how now you can go to church every Sunday? But if you don't go to the throne of grace, you can be backsliding while you're going to church. You can get in cold, hard, judgmental, mean while you're coming to church, why? Because you're not getting to the throne of grace, you're just coming to a building. Buildings don't change you, Jesus changes you and he changes you most at the throne of grace.

Let's close our eyes. Anybody here behind me or in front of me who just says, pastor, those words are like cold water on a hot day, I see now with clarity that what I need is mercy and grace and they're only dispensed at the throne of grace. No wonder God said, my house shall be called the house of prayer.

Not because he wants to legalistically rule over us but he's saying, please come. Look, listen to me while your eyes are closed, listen. Please come to God today.

Come with your mess up, come with your confusion, come with your questions, come with your weakness, come with your guilt, come with whatever you have, just please get to the throne of grace. The devil will try to block you a thousand ways and every day he does that with all of us because he knows he's defeated at the throne of grace. He's always defeated because that's where we hook up with our savior, fresh mercy, new grace.

Anybody here just feels, pastor, that was for me, I need to receive something from God, whether it's mercy or grace, I need it bad. We all need God every day, that's why we need to pray every day but I have special needs right now. Just stand where you are, just stand.

Behind me, in front of me, just stand. That was for me, God brought me here today just for that. He brought me here to hear that sermon.

Just stand right where you are. I'm a Christian but oh, do I need grace in a special area of my life? I need grace. I need strength.

I need wisdom. I need direction. I need whatever.

I need a job. I need whatever. It all comes from the throne of grace.

Everybody, keep your eyes closed. Those of you that are standing, come out of your seat and come to the altar. Lord, we thank you that you are ever ready to show us mercy when we come sincerely to the throne of grace.

Forgive us our trespasses today as we forgive those who have trespassed against us. Remove all unforgiveness and rancor and anger from our hearts otherwise that will block your mercy from being shown to us. Have mercy.

Give us the grace we need today. You feel for us. We know that from your word.

You see what my friends are going through here who have come to the front. You know every challenge they face. You know every valley they're walking through.

You know every attack of the enemy. In the strong name of Jesus, we ask for grace just in the nick of time, just when they need it. Direction, wisdom, strength, grace of every kind.

Make us a people who spend time at the throne of grace. Save us from being a go-to-church-on-Sunday congregation, and that's the end of it. Help us to have a walk with you.

Help our Tuesday night meetings to be strong in prayer as we call down from heaven all the grace that we need, not only for us, but for people around the world. Thank you that we can intercede and the throne of grace is where we can do it. Save us from living shallow lives.

Save me from being a shallow pastor, shallow preacher. Help us to draw near to you. Everybody stand.

And now we pronounce your blessing on your people today. We will be blessed today. We will be blessed all day because you are a God of blessing.

And your Holy Spirit is the spirit of grace. Let us rest in your presence. Let us rest in your love today and love one another as never before.

We pray this in Jesus' name. And Lord, help us next week to get all this thing worked out with the movement of the children and bless our children as never before as they learn more about you. We ask this as a congregation in Jesus' name.

And everyone said. Turn to your left and right and give somebody a hug. Come on, give someone a hug.

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