

Anchored in Christ

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Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Heb. 6:19-20 reads: "*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*"

The heading for this text is "The Certainty of God's Promise," which is an anchor for the soul. Notice that the anchor is outside of us; it is anchored on God's promise. Think about it: to be anchored in or on you provides no stability. Let's say you are out fishing in a boat and you found the ideal spot. Do you throw the anchor to another place in the boat? Or leave it in the boat? Of course not! That makes as much sense as marking your fishing spot by putting an "X" on the floor of the boat. You throw the anchor overboard to be anchored to something other than yourself. If you try to anchor to yourself, you end up floating along, driven by the current and the wind.

A few years ago, I got a great lead for perch fishing: You head for this certain landmark and as soon as you reach 19 feet of water, you throw your anchor overboard. It worked. My wife, Doris, and I caught large perch. We could anchor on that recommendation because it had been tried. It was a certainty, as was promised.

So often, though, we would rather try to anchor on ourselves. We try to do what is right and live by the Ten Commandments for our salvation. Or we try to anchor on earthly things that give way and don't hold us firm in the driving winds or currents of this life. How many people have ventured into life thinking that their health, job or education will be an anchor to hold them in a place of success? With God's blessing this will happen. But forget about who gave you the ability or the blessing and you may become unanchored. For if you don't give thanks and pray to God for continued blessings, He may throw the anchor back in your boat. That's what you are saying and where you want it anyway if you don't thank and praise God. Of course God sometimes will pull up your anchor and carry you to a different body of water for better fishing or for the purpose of meeting someone else and sharing the blessings you have had in the past anchored in Christ.

When Doris and I had anchored in the spot already found and shared with us, we were able to swing back and forth on that anchor rope to enjoy that whole area around us. So it is in your lives — when you are anchored in Christ, you can enjoy all the pleasures of life. And when the winds and currents seem to be carrying you away, you can be sure that the anchor will hold because it is on the solid ground in what God has done through His Son.

You can be sure that you are anchored in Christ when you are anchored on the certainty of God's promises given in His Word and Sacraments. For these Means of Grace are outside of ourselves. There it is that you receive what God has promised — forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Think about it. In Baptism you are anchored into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because He has died, you cannot die because you can only die once; and because He rose as the first fruit from the grave so shall you. God has promised that you are His child and you cannot be ripped loose

by Satan or anyone else, although you could cut the rope of faith that holds you to that anchor by severing yourself from God's Word and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

A rope's strength is determined by how many strands it has going through it. The more strands in the rope, the stronger it is. For even if a strand or two or more are damaged it can still hold. Your rope of faith tied to the anchor of Christ by God's work and promise to you needs to be repaired and strengthened so that it will not tear loose from the anchor. There is nothing more frustrating and helpless than to see the anchor rope tear or come loose from the boat and disappear out of sight. Been there! Done that!

The anchor is still there; you are just not attached to it. Another scary situation is when the anchor rope isn't long enough for the deep waters you may find yourself in. What good is a rope of faith that is 30 feet long when you are in treacherous, 50-foot waters?

At the Lord's Supper, you strengthen and lengthen the rope of faith to the anchor of Christ. The rope of faith is strengthened and lengthened as you are assured again that you have received what Christ promised: "the forgiveness of sins."

Also, nowhere in God's Word does God ask you to anchor in yourself. Nowhere does He say anchor your salvation for eternal life in what you have done. Nowhere in God's Word does He say anchor yourself in your weak, fluttering feelings. Nowhere in God's Word does He say a weak faith or a short rope of faith is all you need. For as soon as the winds come up or the currents get stronger, you will be washed away and end up going over the waterfalls that will kill you eternally. Once you're started over the falls, there is no time or effort on your part that will stop the tumbling and impact at the bottom of the falls.

No, we don't anchor anything in this life or for eternal life by anchoring in or on ourselves. We have hope in Jesus, who went before us to die the death of separation from God so that we don't have to. He went on your behalf and mine. Christ is the anchor for the soul — your soul, my soul and the souls of all in the world. He is the firm and secure anchor so that we can approach God in this life and then for eternal life.

He is the anointed High Priest who can take your prayers and sins behind the curtain of the inner sanctuary. That is what you see happening every Sunday and what you are being anchored to. You come to church to be near your God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, into whom you have been anchored in Baptism. You then call upon God for the forgiveness of sins, anchored on Christ's redeeming payment for those sins. Without that anchor of Christ, we could never approach God in His inner sanctuary. For when Christ died, the temple curtain was torn from top to bottom so that now anchored in Christ, you can approach God in His holy of holies, heaven. Jesus is your anchor.