

Sermon preached by Rev. Matthew Teakle at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral, on Wednesday 11 January 2006 Reading - Hebrews 1:1-4
Topic: "Encouraging Words"

Today I want us to be encouraged, encouraged by the fact that God speaks. That God is not silent, he is not distant. He seeks to communicate that he is involved with this world he created, but which fell because of sin. A world which is alienated from him because of sin, is a world he loves and he still speaks into that world.

The book of Hebrews was written to encourage followers of the Lord Jesus who were suffering. The reason they were suffering was precisely because they were followers of the Lord. So, knowing Hebrews is meant to encourage Christians who are suffering for the name of Christ, how would we expect the letter to the Hebrews to begin? Well, it starts with the fact that God speaks. In verse 1 of the first chapter of Hebrews it says, *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ..* So God spoke in the past, and he didn't just speak once, twice, or even three times. He spoke at many times, and not just in one way but in many ways.

Think about it for a moment. How do we get to know somebody? If I were to go to the cricket or a concert and sat next to a total stranger for the entire time without communicating, could I then go home and say that I knew that person? No. In order for me to claim to know somebody I must first speak with them. Speaking is THE way, the only way we get to know somebody. Speaking is at the centre of relationship. It's an obvious point for us to hear this, but God speaks. And if God speaks, he's revealing himself, he is relational. Like many profound truths it is somewhat over familiar, but it is true. God speaks. He has revealed himself to this broken world at many times and in many ways.

But that's in the past, the next question is: How does God speak now? In the present? In our age? Well, verse 2 gives us the answer, *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.* The word "but", always helps us doesn't it? The word "but" helps us to understand that something very important is coming up. Something that is of even greater importance to what came before it. And verse 2 says *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.*

So God speaks, and he speaks a lot. In the past he spoke by the prophets but now he speaks directly by his Son. In the past he spoke by prophets through the fathers, now he speaks to us directly through the Son who is God, who was there at the beginning of all things and through whom he created the world. In the past God spoke at various times, but now he has spoken at the end of times. In other words the bible is all about Jesus Christ, from start to finish.

Friends, we are living at the end of times, in the last days. That's another obvious point isn't it? If we read our bibles we know that's true. But, it doesn't seem like it's the last days. We have commerce and industry, we have building projects, and so on it goes. Life goes on. But we are living in the last days. If we are living in the last days, it's important to make getting to know God our number one priority. And we can't say, "God doesn't speak." We know that he does speak, we know that in the

past he spoke at many times and in many ways. And now in these last days he has spoken a complete word by his Son our Lord Jesus Christ. We know that his word the Bible is about God's work in this world to bring us into relationship with himself in Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:6, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."* In others words, I am God. If getting to know God is a matter of listening to what he has to say, then getting to know God is getting to know Jesus.

What was spoken by God in the past was not listened to by those who heard it, they ignored God and they were punished for that. It says in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 that *We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.* God's word in the past spoken at many times and in many ways were written to instruct us.

In these last days God has spoken his final word, his complete word to us in Christ. It can be called a complete word because it is a word of salvation, it is a word of healing, a word of restoration, a word of forgiveness and finally it is THE word of LOVE. Jesus' blood shed on a cross speaks a final and complete word of salvation. We can go no further than the Son of God dying in our place for our sin. Jesus risen from the dead speaks a word of assurance for us that God's justice reigns, because Jesus has been declared right, he has been justified, he has been vindicated and declared right. If we are followers of Christ and listen to him we are in him and so we also are justified, made right with God. Jesus' death and resurrection brings forgiveness and restoration in our relationship to our creator.

In verse 3 of today's passage from Hebrews it says this about Jesus: *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.* So, the work is complete, the purification for sins has been done, finished, the most complete word for opening up relationship with God has been spoken. From this, forgiveness, now and forever, flows from the throne of God our Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. But now, in these last days we must listen to that word.

Life is full of pain and suffering, and nothing in this life offers us what God has promised by his word in the past and delivered by his word in the present, in Jesus Christ the Lord. Friends be encouraged, if you have accepted Christ as your Lord then hold fast to it and be assured of your salvation. Know that God can be trusted to provide for your needs now and into eternity. But if you haven't accepted Christ then you have no relationship with God. And so now, in these last days it is the time to put your trust in Christ. *".. in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."* (Hebrews 1:2-5)

