

## A CHANGELESS GOD FOR A CHANGING WORLD – HEBREWS 13:1-8

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**<sup>1</sup>Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. <sup>2</sup>Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. <sup>3</sup>Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. <sup>4</sup>Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. <sup>5</sup>Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” <sup>6</sup>So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?” <sup>7</sup>Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup>Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**



Grace mercy and peace to you from the one who was, who is, and who is to come,

On October 2, 1930, *The Lutheran Hour* debuted on CBS radio, with Walter A Maier as its host. This show was one of the first religious radio programs to use the medium of radio, to spread the pure gospel of Christ across the country and also the world. During the 20 years that Walter Maier served as speaker for this program the United States and the world went through remarkable upheaval. The Great Depression and World War II and the dropping of the atomic bomb rocked the world. Maier spoke to the issues going on in the world, preaching to them God's stern law, and comforting them with God's pure gospel. He possessed an ability to communicate traditional Christianity in an untraditional manner.

One of the sermons he preached was for New Year's Eve, and he used the text before us this evening from Hebrews 13. His theme is what we ponder this evening, "A CHANGELESS GOD FOR A CHANGING WORLD." Maier probably wasn't the first person to use that phrase, and he definitely isn't the last. But in the time in which Maier lived, it was appropriate. That theme is just as appropriate for us to consider this evening also, A CHANGELESS GOD FOR A CHANGING WORLD.

(1)

It has been said that the only sure things in this world are death and taxes. Everything else is subject to change. The same could be said for the early Jewish Christians. The Jewish Christians were going through their own challenges. In a way they almost felt

caught in the middle. They no longer followed the “Jewish” religion of the Old Testament, the religion that was still waiting for the Messiah. But they didn’t feel a connection to the other pagan religions around them either. And Christianity at this time was still relatively young, that maybe they wondered if being a Christian is worth it, is being a Christian advantageous to being a Jew.

This is really what the whole letter to the Hebrews is all about. There’s speculation to who wrote it, because no author is expressly given. But the theme behind the entire book is talking about how much better Jesus is than the shadows of Jesus in the Old Testament – whether it’s the sacrifices, or Moses himself. And so the author of Hebrews wants to convince his listeners of the strength and security they have in Christ. They may have been tempted to change along with the rest of the world, but they should not.

And why should they not? Because they have a **CHANGELESS CHRIST**. The Christ they were taught about does not change. You don’t have to worry about Christ changing his mind about what he has said, he will not change when the world changes. He is the solid rock. This is the same as when God said in the Old Testament book of Malachi, **“I, the Lord do not change.”** How easy it would have been for the early Jewish Christians to trade in their Christianity for the latest and greatest fad that would make them popular. But the author tells them it’s not worth it.

Instead he focuses on how Christians are to act in spite of the changing world around them. To continue loving their brothers and sisters in Christ, remembering them in their tough times with not only prayers, but with the gifts that God has bestowed upon them. Instead of changing with the world and their view toward marriage, a Christian is to honor marriage, and be content with the blessings God has given. All of this is because **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and tomorrow.”**

The world is changing all around us as well. Some changes for the better, other changes for worse. About the only way the world is not changing, is in its rebellion against its creator. Oh, people may find different ways to rebel against their creator, but it is still rebellion. In fact we can do no other. Unfortunately, you see this in the way that the world views sins against God. Instead of calling sin a sin, it might be called a mistake, or an “oops” at best. At worst, sin is normalized and even put up on a pedestal. There was a time not too long ago when certain four letter words wouldn’t be said on TV. But times have changed. There was a time when hooking up before marriage was verboten. Now, it’s standard, and in fact considered wise to find out your compatibility. There was a time when homosexuality was shunned, now it’s praised as brave and strong.

But we do not have to look out at the world to see how it has adjusted their definition of sin. We have done it as well. It’s easy to call sin a sin here in church, but how often have we made excuses for our behavior – our fits of anger, our habitual temptation,

and excused the sin right out of it. But it doesn't matter what we call sin, it matters what God calls sin. And God doesn't change, therefore his views on sin don't change either. For not only will God judge the adulterer and the sexually immoral, but he will judge all sinners.

And yet even then we can be thankful that God doesn't change. Because just when God was ready to lay down the hammer on our sins, Christ stepped in, showed undeserved love and took the punishment in our place. It's something that we all know already, because it's something that doesn't change. And we can thank God that this doesn't change. A changeless Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever. A Christ who will not change with the changing world.

## (2)

How comforting that is when we live in A CHANGING WORLD. Just think about what has all changed in just this last year. Think about what has changed in the world. One year ago today, the popular *Frozen* song, "Let It Go," was only beginning to be sung in minivans across the country. The Sochi Olympics had not yet taken place, and Russia had not invaded Ukraine. And Jay Leno was still hosting the Tonight Show.

Maybe some of you greeted 2014 with care-free laughter and high hopes, but have since been flung on your knees in despair and prayer. Perhaps this has been a year of gain and blessing for you. Yet even you probably know how fragile these blessings can be, how long they will last is uncertain. But we don't need the trials of life, or the blessings of life to tell us that the world we live in is a changing place. It is precisely because the world is a changing place that it is good to rely on a CHANGELESS CHRIST.

Thank God that as this year tapers to a close, we can rise above this changing world and believe with unswerving conviction that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Surrounded by change and decay, Christ comes to us with this message of unchanging hope. It is because of that same unchanging hope that several of our Grace members had, which puts them face to face with Christ in heaven.

But while we here must trek through the changing world, we can do it with our eyes fixed on a changeless Christ. When changes happen in our life that tempt us to doubt God, we can look to our changeless Christ. When changes happen in our life that tempt us to trust in ourselves, we must look to our changeless Christ. When changes happen that fly in the face of our faith, we must look to our changeless Christ.

As we gather here this evening, we have heard about the changeless Christ who was with us this past year. We have tasted the changeless Christ in the sacrament. We know the changeless Christ will be with us in the year to come. It doesn't matter what this world will bring – good or bad, we cling to our changeless Christ for a changing world. Amen.