



Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Prepared by Rev. James R. Wilson, D. Min.  
Good Shepherd Church - October 9, 2011

Sermon Title: When the Will is Read

Sermon Text: Hebrews 9.15-22  
Related Texts: Mark 14.12-26; Romans 8.15-21;  
Galatians 3.15-25; 1 Peter 1.18-21; Mark 8.34-38

## I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

What is the usual motivation for creating a will or a living trust? How is a will or living trust a demonstration of love and self-giving?

## II. Introduction

The author of Hebrews has identified Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God, as the great high priest who has entered the Most Holy Place of God's presence and there is actively interceding for us. Unlike priests under the older covenant who entered a physical "inner room" only after offering the blood of sacrificed animals for their purification, Jesus entered the Most Holy Place by his own blood. As we see in this passage, as he gave his life, Jesus put into effect a new covenant - a will that extends an inheritance to all who trust in him.

## III. Study the Text – Read Hebrews 9.15-22

- 1) What role, according to verse 15, is Jesus now in? What is promised in this new covenant of which Jesus has become the mediator?
- 2) Think about the nature of offering animal sacrifices. Can you imagine the process that is involved? How does the animal that is offered represent the person who offered it? What steps would have been involved in actually offering the life of the animal as a sacrifice? What was the cost of presenting this sacrifice? What was the effect of it (see Hebrews 9.13)?
- 3) How does the sacrificing of animals demonstrate God's self-giving love?
- 4) How does Jesus' sacrificial death provide a ransom that frees us from the sins committed under the first covenant (you might want to refer to Galatians 3.15-25)?
- 5) In verses 16 and 17 the author uses the Greek word - *diatheke* - that can be translated "covenant" and "will" - as in one's "last will and testament." What was required for this new "will" to take effect? What does this suggest about the self-giving love of God?

- 6) Take a look at Romans 8.15- 21. How does Paul describe the significance of this new "will" being put into effect? What does being "an heir - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" mean to you? What does it say about the value God places on you? What does it suggest about how much God wants a relationship with you? How does this affect your sense of self-worth?
- 7) Verses 18 through 22 form what is known as a chiastic. This structural device is intended to call attention to the central point - in this case, the "blood of the covenant."
- |   |       |                                      |
|---|-------|--------------------------------------|
| A | v. 18 | "not... without blood"               |
| B |       | v.19 "according to the law..."       |
| C |       | v. 19 "He sprinkled..."              |
| D |       | <b>v. 20 "blood of the covenant"</b> |
| C |       | v. 21 "He sprinkled..."              |
| B |       | v. 22 "according to the law..."      |
| A | v. 22 | "without the shedding of blood"      |

What point do you think the author is making about the cost involved in providing for our forgiveness? How would you describe the cost involved in God's act of forgiveness, ransom, rescue and restoration that was accomplished by Jesus?

#### IV. Theological Reflection

The notion of blood being shed as a requirement for forgiveness and being made at one with God may seem archaic and pre-modern. Unfortunately throughout history some have taken this notion and misconstrued its meaning, and used it as a rallying cry for committing inhumane acts of bloodshed and violence. The author of Hebrews is investing a great deal of thought and writing in an attempt to show how central, effective, and costly the shedding of blood has been in God's activity of redeeming human beings from sin and spiritual death. Today we find ourselves distanced from slaughtering and dressing animals for food. We are desensitized to violent death by TV and movies. Reports of casualties from disaster and war seem to sound like mere statistics. And as a result we often fail to appreciate the high cost of God's self-giving and sacrificial love... the life of Jesus, God in human form.

#### V. Apply It – Reflect and Respond

- 1) As you may have done last week reflect on Jesus offering his life as the perfect, once for all sacrifice that gives you an eternal inheritance. What does it suggest about your worth to God and how much God wants to be in a relationship with you?
- 2) What are some ways you can demonstrate the kind of self-giving, sacrificial attitude Jesus had - with your spouse and/or family? With people at work? With classmates? With those whom you need to forgive?

- 3) Jesus gave himself for you. His invitation is to trust in him, follow him, and to offer your life in a self-sacrificial way (see Mark 8.31-38). Do you believe that this is the best way to live? Are you willing to surrender all of your life to the leadership of Jesus?

***Jesus has embodied in his own life and death, in his own bloodshed, the loving pardon which God always longed to give. Forgiveness is not cheap or easy, it costs. Ultimately the forgiveness of human beings, the great mercy of the new covenant, came with a grave cost - the death of Jesus, the Son.***

***Thomas G. Long***