

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

HEBREWS 6:13-20 ANCHORED IN REALITY

¹³ When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself; ¹⁴ saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants."

¹⁵ And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. ¹⁶ Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. ¹⁷ Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. ¹⁸ God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. ¹⁹ We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Christians throughout history have been accused by nonbelievers of being escapists. Our faith has been seen by others as a crutch that we employ to cover our weakness or avoid reality. Our God is interpreted as a "god-of-the-gaps," the plug for the holes in the dike of our understanding. Others, like Marx, have described God and Christianity as the "opiate of the masses," the anesthesia employed to keep people sedated and happy. To this way of thinking our faith is nothing more than wishful thinking.

In contrast, believers talk about hope. What is the difference between hope and wishful thinking? For one thing, hope is based in the future, while wishful thinking is present oriented. Along with that, wishful thinking is episodic, while hope is continuous in nature. Christian hope is not wish fulfillment because it looks for fulfillment of a plan already in operation. Hope is based on *the unchanging nature of [God's] purpose which he confirmed...with an oath.*

Rather than a crutch, Christian hope is the anchor that allows us to remain tethered to the true reality; God's truth. It anchors the community of believers to the very throne of God so that it might hold firm no matter the strength of the world-born tempests it encounters. That anchor is eternally secure because it was forged in the mind of God and has been set firmly by the Son, Jesus Christ. It is no wonder that the early Church used the anchor as not just the symbol of hope, but the symbol of the One who is the source of that hope.

O God of hope and God of glory, so secure my heart in you that I will not waiver in the midst of the struggles and doubts of my life. As I am buffeted by the wind and waves of disappoint, disease, deceit and distress, strengthen my faith to cling solely to you. Amen.