**Sermon 10/6/19**

**Hebrews 13:1-21**

Two friends were walking along a crowded city sidewalk.

Suddenly, one of the men remarked: "Listen to the lovely sound of that cricket."

But the other man could not hear the sound of the cricket at all.

He asked his friend: "How can you hear the sound of a cricket amid the roar of the

          traffic and the sounds of the city?"

The first man, who was a zoologist,

          had trained himself to hear the sounds of nature.

He didn't explain to his friend why he could hear the sound of the cricket.

Instead, he reached into his pocket, pulled out a few coins,

          and dropped them onto the concrete sidewalk.

They watched intently as a dozen people began to look for the coins

           as they heard them clinking and jangling amid the sounds of the traffic

           and the noise of the city.

He turned to his friend and said, "We hear what we listen for."

Knowingly or unknowingly we all make choices

            as to what, or who, we are listing for.

What are we tuned in to hear?

We hear what we want to hear.

Are we listening, really listening for God's voice speaking to us?

Or are we so involved in our problems and difficulties,

          that we miss his quiet voice in the midst of our storms?

The early Christians who first read the book of Hebrews were facing persecution,

          and their faith was bending under the pressure.

Some ended up flogged, destitute, hiding out in goatskins,

           hungry and frightened, unsure what they ought to do.

Many died horrible deaths.

The faith described in Hebrews is not sugar coated.

It is tough faith: a constant commitment to hang on and trust God

           against all odds, no matter what.

God does not guarantee a life of luxury and ease.

The book of Hebrews constantly reminded believers to remember

           how Jesus endured great suffering for our sakes.

These early believers were encouraged to continue with

           perseverance, endurance, and not to lose heart,

           but to listen for God's voice in their problems and suffering.

The writer often sounds like a coach giving a pep talk during half-time:

Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers.

Continue to remember those in prison.

Marriage should be honored by all.

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.

Two friends encountered one another on a street corner.

One looked sad, and angry, and almost on the verge of tears.

The other man said,

           “Hey my friend, how come you look like the whole world has caved in?”

The sad fellow said, "Let me tell you.

            Three weeks ago, an uncle died and left me 50 thousand dollars."

"That's not bad at all!" said his friend

"Hold on, I'm just getting started. Two weeks ago, a cousin I never knew,

            Kicked the bucket and left me 95thousand, tax-free to boot."

“Wow, that's great! I'd like that.”

“Last week, my grandfather passed away. I inherited almost a million.”

“So why are so glum and upset?”

The man shrugged his shoulders, “This week - nothing!”

The antidote to greed is contentment.

When we want more than we have, we do become sad, angry, and resentful.

This man was probably content with his life,

              until he began to expect more and more each week.

It is easy to become frustrated when we don't have what we want.

In those times it is good to remember Paul's words:

             "I have learned to be content and happy in good times and in bad,

            when I have plenty, and when I have nothing."

God has already given us so much, yet how often we want even more.

Our lives are to be blessings to others.

God is waiting eagerly to help us be who He intends us to be.

A minister named Max, spent each Monday with the homeless and street people.

He became good friends with man, named Archie.

Archie had severe gout in each foot and could barely walk.

Each day he sold newspapers out on the sidewalk; it was his livelihood.

Rain or shine, he was there.

He needed the money to pay the rent for his little one room apartment and for food.

One Monday Max noticed Archie had an excited look on his face

                   and he invited Max to come and see his apartment.

Max was hesitant, but he knew how much it would mean to Archie.

As they walked to the apartment, Archie said he had been saving his money.

He threw open the door and said proudly, "Look!"

Max looked at the dingy, small, one room apartment,

                    at a ripped sofa with no stuffing,

                    at the junky little black and white TV, no rabbit ears, just a hanger.

And there was a recliner, Archie's pride and joy! He had saved a long time for this.

Archie looked at Max and said, "I have all I need now."

But Max noticed that in the recliner was another man, another street person.

He asked, "What's he doing here?"

Without hesitation, Archie said, "He needs a place to stay.

               Now that I have all I need, don't you think I should share?"

Our lives will be a blessing to others when we see them the way God sees them.

But it doesn't all happen at once.

We gradually grow into the person God wants us to be.

A man and his wife were visiting Rugby, England.

After wandering through the streets they realized they were very lost.

They encountered a young Rugby lad of about 12 years old.

"Could you tell us the way to the station?" the man asked.

"Well," the boy answered, "You turn to the right there by the grocer's shop,

               and then take the second street to the left.

               That will bring you to a place where four streets meet.”

               He paused and then said, “And then, sir, you had better inquire again."

That was an amazingly good answer from one so young.

Too many directions, given all at one time, can easily become confusing.

The boy helped them to go so far, and then get more directions again.

Gradually they would find their way to their destination.

When the ultimate end is uncertain, we probably would do better

                    if we tried to advance, only a little way at a time.

Although God has and will continue to do many things in an instant,

              He knows we need to grow gradually.

We want to live his way, but our knowledge of his plans comes to us bit by bit.

Instead of trying to tackle everything at once,

              we do much better concentrating on one step at a time.

When we do, we don't get hopeless lost so often.

It is better to watch how God's plan unfold bit by bit.

Sandra enjoyed going to the city zoo.

One of her favorite places at the zoo was "The House of Night".

The lights would be turned off and the whole place was total darkness.

As the visitors' eyes adjusted to the darkness,

                   they could just barely see creepy creatures of the night

                   crawling and flying around inside the exhibit.

One day, as she stepped into the exhibit, and before her eyes adjusted,

            she was in complete darkness.

Suddenly, a very small hand grabbed hold of hers.

She smiled and asked him, "And who do you belong to?"

The little boy quietly said: "I'm yours till the lights come on."

God has promised, that no matter what, he will never leave us.

He will never forsake us.

He is with us always, no matter what is happening in our lives.

How comforting to know we can imagine slipping our hands into his,

          trusting that we are his until the lights come on, and we see him face to face.

With our hand in his, we can say with confidence,

               “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.”

And that is a very good way to face each day.

AMEN