

Hebrews 2:9-11

⁹But we look to Jesus (the one who was made lower than the angels for a little while, so that by God's grace he might taste death for everyone), now crowned with glory and honor, because he suffered death.

¹⁰Certainly it was fitting for God (the one for whom and through whom everything exists), in leading many sons to glory, to bring the author of their salvation to his goal through sufferings. ¹¹For he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified all have one Father. For that reason, he is not ashamed to call them brothers.

In His Family

I.

It is said to be one of the loneliest jobs in the world—lamplighter on a rompong. A rompong is a wooden fishing platform with a little hut built on it anchored miles off the shore of Indonesia. The only human contact the occupant experiences is the once-a-week visit from the tending ship to collect the fish and bring supplies and fuel for the generator.

18-year-old Aldi Adilang had been employed on one of these rafts for two years before the fateful day of July 14, 2018. On that day a storm snapped the lines that kept him moored in place. With no means of propulsion or steering and a radio that only operated over short distances, Aldi was at the mercy of the sea.

Have you ever met anyone who just seems to drift aimlessly through life? A person like that just bobs around, seemingly without purpose, without direction, without any means of steering. There is no plan or goal in life.

Far more troubling than people without an earthly goal for their lives are those who couple that with unbelief—with no understanding of God. Every individual has a conscience, which tells us there is a God, and that human beings have a responsibility to that God. The conscience recognizes that there are certain things that are just plain wrong. These things are sin. Since there is a God to whom every human being is responsible, these sins are a big problem. But conscience gives no idea how to fix the problem. They drift aimlessly, at the mercy of the turbulent waters of life. It certainly is tragic to see someone who has never known God and does not know that he devised a plan of rescue for people.

II.

The writer to the Hebrews begins the chapter from which our text is taken with these words: "Therefore, we need to pay even more attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away" (Hebrews 2:1, EHV).

Drift away. Do you ever drift away during the course of a church service? Does your mind wander? It happens to lots of people, and many feel quite guilty about that.

A little drifting during the sermon isn't necessarily such a bad thing. While listening to the pastor preach, you hear a snippet of God's Law, and your mind wanders as your own personal flaws and faults grab your attention. Sometimes you might even wonder if the pastor has been following you around during the week to see or hear some of the things you have said and done against God and his will.

As your mind drifts during the sermon, the Holy Spirit takes God's Word and connects it to the very personal details of your life and your experience. In a sense, that's how sermons are intended to work. It's almost as though there are as many sermons being preached as there are people listening to the sermon.

Your mind drifting and connecting yourself to all the points of God's Law during a

sermon is *not* what the writer to the Hebrews is talking about when he urges us to pay attention so that we do not drift away, however. What he's talking about is drifting away, or wandering off, from hearing God's Word.

The gospel in God's Word and in the sacraments is the way faith is created and strengthened. The Augsburg Confession, one of our Lutheran Confessions, explains. "So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. ² Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given [John 20:22]. He works faith, when and where it pleases God [John 3:8], in those who hear the good news that God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake" (Augsburg Confession: Section I, Article V, paragraphs 1-2).

It's sad, even tragic, to see someone who bobs through life aimlessly without ever knowing God. But drifting away from the Word of God—neglecting God's Word and the hearing of God's Word—can result in the same thing—falling away from God. Not feeding your faith leads to malnourishment, and eventually spiritual death. Drifting aimlessly away is dangerous.

III.

For 49 days Aldi drifted aimlessly in the ocean on his rompong. He told the news media he thought he was going to die out there. As many people would, he became suicidal, but he remembered his parents' advice to pray when in distress, and he had a Bible with him on the raft, so he read his Bible and prayed. Though his raft was unmoored and adrift aimlessly in a vast ocean, his faith was securely anchored to the Word of God.

"But we look to Jesus (the one who was made lower than the angels for a little while, so that by God's grace he might taste death for everyone), now crowned with glory and honor, because he suffered death" (Hebrews 2:9, EHV).

Jesus came. Jesus is God himself, subject to nothing or no one. The Apostle Paul writes: "When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman, so that he would be born under the law, ⁵ in order to redeem those under the law" (Galatians 4:4-5, EHV). Jesus not only came to earth and lived as a human being, but he allowed himself to be placed under God's Law.

A few verses after today's lesson the writer says of Jesus: "For this reason, he had to become like his brothers in every way, in order that he would be a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, so that he could pay for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Indeed, because he suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18, EHV). Later in his letter he writes: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15, EHV). Paul said that Jesus was born under the law to redeem those under the law. He did that by acting as a High Priest, making a sacrifice for the sins of the people. The sacrifice he made was his own self. Jesus came to take on every temptation to sin that could be thrown at anyone so that he could be the perfect, unblemished sacrifice for sin.

Here the writer says: "But we look to Jesus (the one who was made lower than the angels for a little while, so that by God's grace he might taste death for everyone), now crowned with glory and honor, because he suffered death" (Hebrews 2:9, EHV). Every bitter part of tasting death was experienced by Jesus to pay for the sins of everyone. Since he has done that fully and freely for all, Jesus is now crowned with glory and honor.

More than 10 times as he bobbed around on the vast, open ocean, Aldi saw ships passing by. They were so huge and his little raft was so tiny. No ship's crew would be looking for such a tiny speck of a boat in the vastness of the sea. Each time he saw a ship, Aldi would light the lamp he had once used to bring fish into the net. He would wave articles of clothing in a desperate attempt to attract some attention. It never worked. Finally, when the Panamanian freighter was passing, he was able to find the channel they were using on his handheld walkie-talkie. "Help! Help! Help!" he said in English into the microphone. The crew heard and started to look for the castaway. Once they located him, it still took several passes to get Aldi on board the freighter. Their ship was so much bigger there was an extreme danger they would capsize his little raft.

"Certainly it was fitting for God (the one for whom and through whom everything exists), in leading many sons to glory, to bring the author of their salvation to his goal through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10, EHV). Jesus is the author of our salvation—of our rescue. His suffering paid for the sins of the world. He is the One who leads many sons to glory. In other words, Jesus is the One who can—and has—rescued us from a far greater fate than being set adrift in the vast ocean. He has rescued us from drifting away from all we have seen and heard and know about the great things God has done for us. God has rescued us from the greatest of enemies—eternal death and separation from him.

IV.

Once onboard the freighter, Aldi was eventually able to be reunited with his family and talk about his experience. He survived by eating fish and soaking his clothing in seawater, and then wringing it out to get enough to drink without too much salt. Once the fuel in his generator had run low, he had been forced to cook his fish by breaking off pieces of the raft to make a fire.

Sometimes there is nothing like being separated from family for awhile to make a person realize how much you love them and miss them. "For he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified all have one Father. For that reason, he is not ashamed to call them brothers" (Hebrews 2:11, EHV). As believers, you and I have been made Children of God.

We are brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus because we have been adopted into the family of God. We are no longer adrift on the sea of life, but firmly anchored to the Rock of our salvation. We all have one Father—the heavenly Father of our Lord Jesus. As adopted sons and daughters of the heavenly Father, we can call Jesus our brother. Most special of all, because he loves us so much, *he* is not ashamed to call *us* his brothers and sisters.

Paul said to the Romans: "I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither things present nor things to come, nor powerful forces,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39, EHV). No outside force can separate us from our Lord Jesus, but sometimes *we* are tempted to cut the lines and we start to drift away. Even then, Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. Time after time he throws us the lifeline of his Word and Sacraments to strengthen and nourish us.

Hang on. Hang on to that lifeline for all you're worth. Remember always that Jesus is your brother who loves you very much and has made you an heir of heaven alongside himself. Then throw the same lifeline to those who are still adrift. God bless you as you live in your place as a child of God in the family of God. Amen.