

Hebrews 3:7-19

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

“Today, if you hear his voice,

8 *do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,*

on the day of testing in the wilderness,

9 *where your fathers put me to the test*

and saw my works for forty years.

10 *Therefore I was provoked with that generation,*

and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;

they have not known my ways.’

11 *As I swore in my wrath,*

‘They shall not enter my rest.’”

12 *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. 15 As it is said,*

“Today, if you hear his voice,

do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

16 *For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.*

“They always go astray in their heart,” the Lord lamented. And isn’t that a frightening statement? We are not so different than the Israelites. There are areas of our hearts that we are hesitant to inspect, fearful of what we might find, mindful of what dwells within us, of what has reared its head now and again in moments we’d rather forget, hide away, and pretend never happened. Yes, we believe, but unbelief is ever knocking at the door. The account of the father who wanted Jesus to heal his son, held captive by an evil spirit, often comes to my mind. The father said to Jesus, **“I believe; help my unbelief!”** This was the answer of a sinner-saint, of a man whose faith was engaged in struggle with the old Adam, the sinful flesh. His unbelief wasn’t as some theologians have made it seem, almost a badge of honor, as if doubt were a virtue, as if Christian faith were anything less than certain. But his faith was under assault, and he knew he needed the Lord’s help if he was going to maintain it in a fallen world and contrary to the inclinations and disposition of his fallen human nature.

Think of all the miracles the Israelites witnessed and experienced in the exodus. They crossed through the Red Sea. They were fed in the wilderness. They won battles against vastly superior foes. And yet they doubted. And yet they fell and were lost, their bodies scattered in the wilderness as evidence of the high cost of unbelief, so that only the next generation, their children, entered the Promised Land. This is a warning for us, we who have experienced an exodus greater than theirs, an exodus from slavery to sin and death. How foolish we would be, having been delivered in such a way, not by Moses’ staff, but by the cross of Christ, having come to know the miracle of love that is Holy Week, to fail to enter into the Promised Land of heaven because of unbelief. **“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is**

called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.”

As we recommit ourselves to Christ and are renewed through meditation upon His passion this Lent, may we put the writer to the Hebrew’s words into practice, for our own good and the good of our brothers and sisters, that all of us together may remain in faith and enjoy at long last the fruit of our Promised Land in Christ. Amen.