

**A PLACE YOU CAN GO,  
HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT (Feb 16, 2006)**  
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“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence,  
so that we may find grace to help in our time of need.” Heb. 4:16

As we drove to my parents' home in Chicago a few weeks ago for my mom's memorial service, I kept trying to imagine what the house would be like with out her being there. What it would feel like to walk in and not see her there to greet us. I could not recall a time I'd ever been home and she was not there.

When I walked in the back door a quick visual told me everything was the same. I entered the kitchen, no big changes, but then I went to her bedroom and into emptiness. No T.V. on, no phone by her bed...no bed. In the past months her bed had been replaced by a hospital bed, which had already been removed.

I walked around the house listening, sensing, looking... and instinctively returned again and again to her room, standing where her bed should have been. My sister, our husbands and children collectively gathered there wondering, now what?

Because of my dad's heart and leg condition, he has to sleep with his legs raised in a recliner, so when they took the hospital bed, he had no reason to put their bed back in their room.

From the time I was little, their bed was the place where we gathered for family meetings, where we opened birthday presents, where we learned of bad news and celebrated good news, where we spent the day when we were home from school sick. It's where we watched old movies and cheered for the Olympics. Every grandchild took naps on grandma and grandpa's bed, it's where they gathered for stories, ate popcorn and were introduced to Disney movies. The living room was the more formal place. But the bedroom centrally located, was more like the family den where we all gathered. It was the one place where every child and grandchild could all fit and sit close by grandma. It was there that weddings were planned and it was there that I sat only a few months ago to help mom plan for her memorial service. Regardless of whether mom was sitting on her bed reading a book after a long day at work, or watching a movie after dinner, regardless of our age or stage in life, the door was always open and we were always welcome.

Even in the past years with children and grandchildren grown and our families all scattered, when we all returned to visit, we still gathered and piled onto mom and dad's bed to talk.

Now what, now where would we go?

We moved to the kitchen with my dad who sat down at the table they'd had since before any of us kids.

With a small bench, two chairs (one for mom, one for dad) at a table built for 5, the 12 of us clearly wouldn't fit, so we squished around it as best we could. Some of us leaned against the counters and some sat on the floor.

As I looked my mom's chair I was comforted by a sense of her presence.

I could imagine her snapping pole beans for freezing, going over recipes, reading her devotions, talking on the phone, writing letters, drinking coffee, playing board games with us, and eating meals together.

If anyone happened over at dinner time, we pulled up another chair. It's where people sat when they visited, and where pastors over the years talked with my parents. It's where my mom and dad talked privately after dinner.

It's where girls who were fighting sat with mom to work things out, where serious one-on-one talks happened. It's where we sat to talk when I needed advice, wisdom or direction.

The table is where I heard stories about the people and the world around me, where mom read letters and news updates from missionaries and I learned to care about people I had never met. It's where I learned my parents' views on the world, politics and religion.

It's where I learned to pray and read the Bible, where we had family devotions and for a time, place mats that illustrated stories from the Bible, where we learned manners and etiquette.

It's where I grew up and moved from thinking like a child to thinking like a woman. From her chair, mom listened for countless hours while I talked about the issues in my life and shared stories about my husband and my children.

It's where I learned about the grace and mercy of God. Now where would I go? Now who would teach me how to be a gracious grandmother? Who would teach me all the things I still need to learn. Now what?

Then I realized she had done it again. I was drawn back to the table for a lesson. As I sat there I remembered that whenever I had a problem or needed help mom would say, "Let's pray about it, let's go to the throne."

When she said, "Let's go to the throne," she was talking about the Throne of Grace. I grew up with this passage from Hebrews 4:16 which says,

***"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Heb. 4:16)***

#### **A PLACE WE CAN GO:**

We need a place to go when life has been turned upside down, when we get bad news. When the things we thought we could always count on disappear, when the people we thought would always be there are gone, we need a place to go. The world needs a place to go.

And we have one. So "let us approach the throne of grace where we can find grace, mercy and help in our time of need."

#### ***But what is the Throne of Grace, where is it and how do we get there?***

The Throne of Grace is also referred to as the Mercy Seat in the Old Testament. (He. 9:5)

The Mercy Seat was made by Moses. As Moses and the Israelites were camped in the desert at the foot of Mt. Sinai, God called Moses up to the mountain and there he gave him instructions to build the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark was a box with a lid on it that would be the seat.

(The box was called the Ark (which means box) of the Covenant (which was God's Word).

The Ark was about 3  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 2  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 2  $\frac{1}{4}$  , and would hold the Word of God, a Jar of Manna and Aaron's staff.

The lid of the Ark was called the Mercy Seat (because mercy is the same for cover). It had two Cherubim or Angels kneeling on the top, facing each other and looking down at the Ark with their wings spread out covering the Ark.

This is where God said he would come to be with the people, this would be His throne.

Then God said, "There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you my commands for the Israelites." (Ex. 25:22)

It gave him a place to go to be with his people in a way they could experience and gave them a place to go for mercy.

The writer of the book of Hebrews says that this mercy seat was the earthly copy of the throne of grace that exists in heaven. (Heb. 9 & 10)

A seat of mercy is now the Throne of Grace because of the work of Jesus who is able to make all grace abound toward us.

We spent a lot of time in the car driving on our trip to Chicago. I was thinking about the Throne of Grace and where it is in Heaven. Perhaps it's on Salvation Street. Redemption Road. Mercy's Place. Help Highway.

The point is, it's a real place, it's not far away, no farther than our heart. It's not hard to get to, it's as simple as a prayer. There's someone waiting there who loves us.

### **A PERSON TO GO TO:**

We have a place to go and...We have a person to go to when we get there. We have Jesus.

1Tim. Says, "For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone." (1Tim 2:5-6a)

At his death, Jesus went in to the throne room in Heaven and offered his blood as the perfect and permanent atonement for sin. (Heb. 9:12) This is how the atonement seat or Mercy Seat is called the Throne of Grace.

Because he is there offering grace to all who come to him, Heb. 7:25 says that he ever lives to intercede for us as our Great High Priest.

He is a High Priest who is touched by our suffering. (Heb. 4:14-15) He is able to sympathize with our weakness because he was tempted in every way just as we are, yet was without sin.

We have a Savior there who offers forgiveness when we mess up.  
He invites those who are tired and weary to come to him and find rest.  
He assures those who are tempted that he has strength that will help in the hour of need.  
He promises comfort to those who are mourning.

### **A WAY TO GO; COME BOLDLY WITH CONFIDENCE:**

We have a place to go and a person to help when we get there, so then "how" should we go?

The thought of going to a throne, any throne can be an awesome.

Who usually sits on a throne? A king. And It's kind of an unusual thought to think we could just march up to throne of a king anytime we wanted.

Yet we have free unrestricted access to the Throne of Grace. But it was not always this way.

In Old Testament times, access to the Mercy Seat was not open to the general public, but only to the High Priest and only one time a year on the Day of Atonement.

Yet because of the sacrifice that Jesus our Great High Priest, offered on our behalf, we now are encouraged to come boldly with confidence. (Heb. 10:19)

Our confidence in God is a strong anchor that leads us to the Throne of Grace in heaven into God's inner sanctuary which Jesus has already gone through and is there for us. (Heb. 6:19-20; 9:11-12)

So what does it mean to "approach the throne" with confidence?

It means to draw near with boldness. Boldness suggests freedom of speech, no hesitation, no shyness to be unguarded. To feel comfortable enough to say whatever we want.

I would never hesitate to go to my mom, to pull up a seat at the table and talk with her freely about anything because of my confidence in her love for me.

I imagine if my mom were standing next to Jesus at the Throne, how easily it would be to go there. I think that if I were praying, she would shush heaven, saying, "shush, my daughter is praying, and say to Jesus, oh, you have to help her with that."

We can have that same level of comfort and confidence in Jesus and his love for us.

So, we can go to him anytime and talk to him freely about anything, without being guarded or worrying about what he will think of us.

#### **WHAT CAN WE EXPECT? GRACE AND MERCY:**

We have a place to go, a person to help and a way to get there. What can we expect when we get there?

We approach with confidence so that we may obtain grace and mercy to help.

We can expect Grace. Which is that undeserved merit or favor, forgiveness freely granted if we ask him. Grace includes rest, favor and peace.

We can expect Mercy. Mercy includes compassion and comfort in community. To meet our need on several levels physical, mental, spiritual and also practical.

The Bible says that he will never run out of mercy, that his mercy is new every morning. (Lam. 3:22-23)

We can get help. We can go there for ourselves and in prayer for others. God promises help in very practical ways for ourselves and for those we pray for.

We will obtain or receive the help we seek as we "take hold of," "believe," and "experience" his grace and mercy.

#### **WHEN WILL WE GET IT? TIME OF NEED:**

But when? You say? When will we get this help?

In our Time of need, God's help is available. The word "time" suggests, "at just the right time," "in the nick of time."

This is the hard part and requires our trust. We may think he's slow to answer, but he says the help will be there when we need it, at just the right time!

#### **SYMBOLS OF MERCY:**

While driving back to the Cape I was thinking about how my parent's home would never be quite the same. But there were things there like my mom's chair that were symbols of mercy that would forever remind me that no matter what life holds, no matter what happens, God's door is always open, we are always welcome, there is a place we can go for help when we need it.

You all have been a sanctuary for me, a place of mercy during the difficult weeks following my mom's death. Where is sanctuary for you? What are your symbols of mercy? Maybe you have a favorite chair or a place of rest and retreat that can remind you of God's chair, his throne of Grace where help is waiting for you anytime you want to talk...Anytime a situation leaves you wondering "now what?"

There is a place you can go in a time of need.

***"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Heb. 4:16)***

**LET'S PRAY:**

God thank you so much for inviting us to come freely to you with any thing that concerns us, whether for ourselves or for someone else. Thank you for being an ever present help and for giving us a place we can go. Help us to be comfortable approaching your throne. Help us to grow in our confidence as we experience your grace and mercy.

**BENEDICTION:**

May the God of hope Fill you with all joy and peace in believing, and surely goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life.