HUDSON'S HOPE CHAPEL

# A Better City and a Better Way

June 7, 2026 · Series: Greater Still - The Glory of Jesus in Hebrews · Luke Hughes-Bunger

**Main Passage:** Hebrews 12:18-29; 13:1-25 (ESV)

**Big Idea:** Because through Jesus we have come to Mount Zion and received an unshakable kingdom, we must worship with reverence and live as citizens of the better city.

## Introduction

Iwona Gniadek wrote about the day she became a Canadian citizen at a naturalization ceremony in Winnipeg.

The day included registration, reflection, conversation, the Oath of Citizenship, and the receiving of a citizenship certificate. It was not merely paperwork. It was a moment to consider where people had come from, where they had now come to, and what this new belonging meant for the rest of their lives.

At the end of her reflection, Iwona wrote, "I'm at home now."

That helps us feel the weight of Hebrews 12. The passage does not begin by saying, "Try harder to look religious." It says, "You have come." Through Jesus Christ, believers have come somewhere real. We belong to an unshakable kingdom, and that new belonging shapes how we live now.

## 1. See Where You Have Come

Hebrews 12 begins with a contrast:

*"For you have not come..."* and *"But you have come..."* (Heb. 12:18, 22)

The first mountain is Sinai. Sinai was not evil. God gave His law there and revealed His holiness there. But Sinai also made the distance between a holy God and sinful people painfully clear. The mountain could not be approached casually. The people were afraid.

Many people still think of the Christian life mainly in Sinai terms: God is there, we are here, He is holy, we are guilty, and the best we can do is keep our distance and hope we have done enough.

But Hebrews says that through Jesus, believers no longer stand at a distance.

We have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. We have come to God, the judge of all. Most importantly, we have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to His blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

That line gathers the whole message of Hebrews together. Jesus is the better revelation of God, the better priest, the better sacrifice, and the mediator of the better covenant. His blood

actually cleanses and opens the way into God's presence.

Abel's blood cried out for justice. Jesus' blood speaks a better word. It secures mercy, cleanses guilt, opens access, and says that sinners who come to God through Him are welcomed, forgiven, and brought home.

Christian obedience begins by looking at Jesus and seeing where He has brought us.

Not Sinai, but Zion. Not distance, but access. Not condemnation, but a better word spoken by better blood.

## 2. Receive the Unshakable Kingdom

Grace does not make the Christian life casual. It makes it reverent.

Hebrews 12:25 says:

*"See that you do not refuse him who is speaking."*

That warning brings us back to the beginning of the letter. God has spoken finally in His Son. So we must not drift from Him, harden our hearts against Him, shrink back from Him, or refuse Him.

Hebrews will not let us flatten grace. Some people hear holiness and become distant, as though God is mainly a threat. Others hear grace and become casual, as though forgiveness means it no longer matters whether they listen, follow, and obey.

Hebrews refuses both. Through Jesus we have come near, and through Jesus we have come near to the living God.

The passage then speaks about a final shaking. The point is not speculation. The point is stability. Everything in this world that feels immovable can be shaken: health, money, nations, plans, reputations, even church life.

But Hebrews 12:28 says:

*"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken..."*

That is the promise of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, God is not merely giving us better coping strategies for a fragile world. He is giving us a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Faith does not mean everything around us becomes steady. Faith means Christ gives us a kingdom that remains steady when everything else shakes.

The right response is grateful reverence:

*"Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."* (Heb. 12:28-29)

## 3. Live as Citizens of the Better City

Hebrews 13 can feel like a list of disconnected commands: love one another, show hospitality, remember prisoners, honor marriage, do not love money, praise God, do good, and share what you have.

But these are not random moral reminders. This is what life looks like for people who have come to Zion. It is the social shape of the better city.

Brotherly love continues. Hospitality welcomes others because we know what it is to be welcomed by grace. Compassion remembers the vulnerable, suffering, and mistreated. The gospel creates a people whose love has addresses, names, meals, prayers, offerings, and open doors.

Hebrews also calls us to purity and contentment. Marriage is to be honored. Sexual immorality must be resisted. Money must not become our savior. We can be content because God has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).

Then Hebrews gives one of its great stabilizing lines:

*"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."* (Heb. 13:8)

Leaders come and go. Cultures shift. Pressures change. Our own strength rises and falls. But Jesus Christ is the same. So we stay with Christ, stay with grace, and stay with the One who does not change.

## 4. Go to Jesus Outside the Camp

Hebrews 13 also tells us that Jesus suffered outside the gate. He was rejected, bore reproach, and was crucified outside the city.

Then verse 13 says:

*"Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured."*

Some people want Zion without reproach. They want the comfort of belonging to God without the cost of being identified with Jesus. But Hebrews says the way to the city goes through loyalty to the crucified Christ.

Verse 14 gathers the last three weeks together:

*"For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."*

Faith looks forward to what God has promised. Faith runs with endurance in the present struggle. Faith lives now as citizens of the city to come.

That does not mean we despise this place. We love our town, serve our neighbors, pray, welcome, give, and build what good we can build. But we do all of it knowing this world is not our final home.

Because Jesus' sacrifice is finished once for all, our lives now become sacrifices of praise, doing good, and sharing what we have.

## 5. Rest in the God Who Equips You

Hebrews does not end with our resolve. It ends with grace.

The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant. He equips His people with everything good to do His will (Heb. 13:20-21).

The God who brings us to Zion is the God who equips us to live as citizens of Zion.

So come to Jesus. Do not remain at a distance. And if you belong to Him, live this week as one who has come home.

You have come to Zion. You are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

## Discussion Guide Questions

1. Why is the citizenship ceremony a helpful picture for Hebrews 12?
2. What is the difference between Sinai and Zion in Hebrews 12:18-24?
3. Why is it important that Hebrews says, "you have come," not only "you will come"?
4. How does Jesus' blood speak a better word than the blood of Abel?
5. What happens when Christians think of the Christian life mostly in Sinai terms?
6. Why do gratitude and reverence belong together?
7. What temporary things are you tempted to treat as if they cannot be shaken?
8. How does Hebrews 13 show that doctrine and daily life belong together?
9. What is one ordinary way brotherly love, hospitality, or generosity could become visible this week?
10. What does it mean to go to Jesus "outside the camp"?
11. How does Hebrews 13:20-21 keep the final word on grace rather than human resolve?
12. What is one way this series through Hebrews has helped you see Jesus more clearly?