Introduction

I wonder if you could tell me where you were and what you were doing on September 11, 2001. Most people when asked this question can answer this straight away. On this day, now known as 911, our world as we know it was shaken.

A Brief Description of 911 (From Wikipedia):

The September 11 attacks (also referred to as 9/11) were a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda on the United States on the morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001. The attacks killed 2,996 people, injured over 6,000 others, and caused at least $10 billion in infrastructure and property damage.

Four passenger airliners operated by two major U.S. passenger air carriers (United Airlines and American Airlines)—all of which departed from airports in the northeastern United States bound for California—were hijacked by 19 al-Qaeda terrorists. Two of the planes, American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175, were crashed into the North and South towers, respectively, of the World Trade Center complex in New York City. Within an hour and 42 minutes, both 110-story towers collapsed, with debris and the resulting fires causing partial or complete collapse of all other buildings in the World Trade Center complex, including the 47-story 7 World Trade Center tower, as well as significant damage to ten other large
surrounding structures. A third plane, American Airlines Flight 77, was crashed into the Pentagon (the headquarters of the United States Department of Defense) in Arlington County, Virginia, leading to a partial collapse of the building's western side. The fourth plane, United Airlines Flight 93, initially was steered toward Washington, D.C., but crashed into a field in Stony creek Township near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after its passengers tried to overcome the hijackers.

*It was the single deadliest incident for firefighters and law enforcement officers in the history of the United States, with 343 and 72 killed respectively.*

On September 11, 2001 our worlds were undoubtedly shaken. Everything changed. Our worlds were less secure. The terror on that day robbed each of us of the stability that we had enjoyed, and planted with certainty in our hearts the uncertainty and temporal nature of this world. Our worlds changed forever.

Now, I don't want to dredge up the horror of that event. Most of us were glued to the TV for days, and probably impacted deeply as we viewed the carnage in the USA. Rather, I want to use it as an example of what Hebrews 12 is trying to say. It is saying that **We shall inherit an unshakeable kingdom if we willingly receive God's grace.**

If we have consciously received the grace of God through Jesus Christ (if we have said yes to the Son of God, Jesus), we get to inherit, as sons and daughters of the Most High, a kingdom that cannot be shaken ... an unshakeable kingdom.

It's something that we all desire and want. To live in a space that is secure, one filled with grace and love and truth, and a space where nothing can touch, rob, destroy, or shake.

You see, our worlds (your world or my world) can be one of only two things. Either they can be shakeable and unstable, when we put our trust in things that are temporary, where moth/rust can destroy/eat away. Or our world can be something that is secure forever ... eternal, nothing can change it.

We're going to look at it further in the back end of Hebrews Chapter 12. We are nearly there – almost through the Book of Hebrews.
We looked at the first 14 verses of Chapter 12 last week, and this week we will look at verses 15 to the end of the Chapter. That means we will finish the Book of Hebrews next Sunday with the final Chapter – Chapter 13. Everyone can cheer!

But first, **Let’s pray.**

*Gracious God & our Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gift of your Word, the Bible. Thank you for the gift of Jesus your son, who came to show us your ways ... ways of grace, true love and how to live in this world. Thank you for His sacrifice that paid the unpayable price of my sin. Teach us and speak to us by and through your Holy Spirit today. Remind us that you are building an unshakeable kingdom. May we desire to know You and what you have for us eternally. In the Holy name of Jesus your son. Amen*

**Let’s read Hebrews Chapter 12:15-29 together**

If you are new today or a visitor, the Book of Hebrews in the Bible is a cracker. It is so rich with God’s promises. Maybe you’ve never read it. Well you really need to. It has a lot of answers to life.

It talks a lot about this unshakeable kingdom and how God is sovereign over it all. Not Donald Trump or Putin etc. The reason we have a life/world that cannot be overrun by anything, is because of the finished work of Jesus on the Cross and His sacrifice for our sin as our Great High Priest. We’ve talked a bit about that in previous weeks.

The book of Hebrews was written to a group of believers who were being treated roughly – they were coping persecution because they had put their trust in Jesus. They were planning to opt out of following Jesus, so that they might release the pressure cooker they were in, and make it easier for them. And the reason these few verses were written were to remind these people (who are true believers) that what they might be tempted to give up is the unshakeable kingdom that God has given them by grace.

Now what would you prefer – to put your life and trust in something that is only temporary, and that will eventually fall over, or be destroyed, or disappear?

Or what you prefer to place your life & your trust in something that is forever, cannot be budged, no one or nothing can touch it? I know which one I would choose?

I was talking to someone yesterday about how temporary some things have been in our life times? Things that come and go that we thought would never die.

Think about the fax machine. Everyone had one. You could receive/send printed information while you slept or were away from the office. TEMPORARY.
Videos and Video Players – you could go down to your local Blockbuster video store and select a bunch of videos and have a Star Trek Marathon weekend. Videos – no one uses them any more. They are just cumbersome. It’s all online or Netflix. Videos – TEMPORARY.

Did you know that USB sticks/ports are now a thing of the past? A lot of computers are now being released without them. Physical storage devices are a thing of the past. Everything will be stored in the Cloud. USB’s – TEMPORARY.

High quality cameras will soon disappear. With the rise of Smartphones with high quality inbuilt cameras, the sales of normal cameras have diminished. Companies like Sony, Google & Samsung are all developing new technology that will record everything through contact lenses that you wear. Cameras – TEMPORARY.

Physical cash money they say will disappear in the next 50 years – so they say. Everything is now electronic and everything will be done via voice & fingerprint technology on smart devices. Pretty scary stuff. Cash – TEMPORARY.

With the development of laser eye surgery, they are saying that glasses will be a thing of the past. That’s not a bad thing. I can never find mine, and I’m forever cleaning them or sitting on them. Glasses – TEMPORARY.

Here’s a range of other things that we thought we’d have for ever, but they won’t be around in the next few decades. They are only temporary:

- Plastic shopping bags;
- petrol (electric cars on the rise);
- keys (house & car);
- wood fireplaces (because of the pollution and health issues);
- Newspapers/printed media;
- stamps (and hand-written letters);
- land-line telephones;
- Televisions (all done via smart devices now);
- manual gear stick cars (everything is going towards driverless cars);
- Doctors doing surgery (heading towards robotic surgery);
- the Post Office;
- cheques;
- privacy;
- anonymity;
- Pepsi-Max (maybe) … in fact most of the things you own/have/enjoy won’t be around in 50 years.

There are heaps more, but isn’t it interesting to imagine that most things that are common place right now in our lives are really just temporary or shaky at best?

So today I want to tell you about an unshakeable kingdom. Last night I spent an amazing 3.5 hours with 200 Teen Street Leaders at Gatton Uni. They are expecting 600 on campus this afternoon for the next week. Teenagers, leaders, mentors, counsellors, support people – they are talking about one thing this week. Everything they do points to one thing for the next week. Do you think they would be pointing to temporary things or a shaky life? No way!!!

They are pointing to an unshakeable Kingdom. They are pointing to Jesus and His unshakeable kingdom. I don’t know about you, but I know that kids growing up looking at rubbish all day on their smartphones or devices is not an unshakeable
kingdom. And yet we’ve seen it happen in our lifetime. We have allowed it, pointed them to it. It’s a global phenomenon that’s swept the planet and seduced our young people in just the last few years.

Mark Zuckerberg wrote an article this week titled ‘Facebook is now your Church’. Technology is now the new religion. Wow! And yet Facebook is only temporary. It will be replaced by something else in a decade or two ... or maybe less.

Do you see how we place our trust in things that are temporary? We think they are the best thing, that we can’t live without it. Let me tell you, I am living proof that you can live without Facebook. I’m a survivor. I’m not controlled by the daily tweets or events of others. I’ve chosen not to be a Facebook User. You might think that is odd, but I find it liberating.

I believe that God is calling us to (re)hear his story (for the first time for some) and recognize the unchanging nature of what He has in store for His people. It’s unshakeable. It’s permanent. It’s eternal. It won’t become obsolete.

Let’s discover this unshakeable offer from God in this passage.

We shall inherit an unshakeable kingdom if we willingly receive God’s grace.

Hebrews 12:18-29 Introduction
I’ve just scratched the surface about temporary things, but they remind us that we do live in an unstable kingdom and, for that matter, in an unstable world.

By way of contrast, today’s passage reminds us that God offers us an unshakable kingdom – an eternal home – a place in part defined by its complete stability.

Today's passage talks about 3 things:

Hebrews 12:18-29 Outline:

I. The Terror of Mount Sinai 12:18-21
II. The Grace of Mount Zion 12:22-24
III. Let Us Have Grace 12:25-29

The Terror of Mount Sinai (12:18-21)
This passage goes back to that awesome day when the Ten Commandments were given on Mt. Sinai. The original story is in Exodus. Moses summarized it again for the people in Deuteronomy 4:9-14.

The events at Mt. Sinai emphasized the separation between God and the people. They were His people and He was their God, yet they still had to keep a safe distance from this holy and terrifying Deity. If God never communicated the reality of this distance to them, then we would never be able to grasp the greatness of His grace today. Here are the details:

- The mountain that cannot be touched
- Burning with fire
- Blackness
- Darkness
- Tempest / storm
- The sound of a trumpet
- A terrifying voice speaking words

Verse 20 - They were commanded not to come near to even so much as touch the mountain without God’s permission. If so much as one of their animals were to have wandered up onto the mountain it would have been killed.

Verse 21 Even Moses was terrified by the sheer gravity of all these events. What was the point of all this drama? The lesson to be learned from the terrifying atmosphere at Mt. Sinai is that God is not to be trifled with.

Pagan deities of Egypt where they had been, or Canaan where they were going, could be manipulated, coerced, bribed or ignored. They could happily choose to worship one god over another. Not so the living God.

He is utterly holy.
He is perfectly righteous.
He is completely fair and just.
He will not be mocked by those who refuse to take Him seriously.

The God of Israel was different in almost every way from the gods of the nations around them – which in fact were no gods at all. And Israel needed to learn this.
They needed to learn to fear the Lord.

God can only be safely approached when we come near on His terms. And we need to learn to fear the Lord as well.

See all of the following:

- Job 28:28
We have the terror of Mt Sinai, but then in the next few verses we have the contrast of the grace of Mount Zion. These two things are held in tension. The fear of the Lord AND the grace of the Lord.

See most people today are interested in the grace of God, but not too interested in the other side of God. You can’t just have a father who is gracious all the time. You also need authority and respect and healthy fear. Otherwise, you end up with spoiled children who grow up not recognizing the reality of life and it’s responsibilities.

Sadly, we are seeing the result of this approach in our communities.

**The Grace of Mount Zion (12:22-24)**

- We have not come to Mt. Sinai. Terrible distance is not the main message that God is communicating today. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but it is not the last word.

While it’s true God can only be approached on His own terms, it’s also true that He seriously wants us to approach Him.

We have come to Mt. Zion, to God’s own city. Instead of an untouchable, terrifying place, we are met by joyful throngs of both people and angels together.

And the message that we receive at Mt. Zion is one of grace. Here are the details:

- The Heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God
- An innumerable company of angels
- The church of the firstborn, registered in heaven
- God is there, the judge of all people
- The spirits of just men made perfect
- Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant
- The blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel
- Our heroes back in Hebrews 11 were waiting for this heavenly city. See Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16.
Verse 23 We are citizens of this city, registered there, along with every member of the church. See Luke 10:20  See Philippians 3:20

We have joined the church of the firstborn – not firstborn chronologically, but firstborn as to rank, privilege and responsibility.

Earlier in this chapter we discussed Esau despising his birthright and trading it to Jacob. Like Jacob, we have come into that place of privilege in our Father’s family.

And who do we find there? We find God, of course, the final Judge of all.

We find the saints of God who have gone before us.
They are called “spirits” because they have not yet experienced a bodily resurrection.
They are called “just men made perfect” because they have received that righteousness that is only received by faith.

And we find Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant. See Hebrews 8:6 and 9:15.

The passage highlights the fact that Christ’s blood speaks better things than that of Abel. Christ’s blood compared with that of Abel:

In Genesis 4, Cain killed Abel his brother. So God confronted him. (See Genesis 4:10.)

The blood of Abel cried out for vengeance, retribution and justice.
The blood of Christ speaks to us of God’s forgiveness and His holy gracious love.
The blood of Christ speaks better things. It is Christ’s blood that gives us the right to enter heaven; we enter on God’s own terms.
That gracious, sacrificial death secures our place in a glorious eternal home.
Our Lord has prepared us a city and Christ’s blood has secured us a place in it.
We need to think about that often and think about it seriously and deeply.

“\textit{When the days are difficult and we are having a hard time enduring, that is when we should look up and contemplate the glories of heaven. Moses ‘endured, as seeing Him who is invisible’ (Heb. 11:27). The patriarchs endured as they looked ahead to the city God was preparing for them. One way to lay hold of God’s grace is to look ahead by faith to the wonderful future He has prepared for us.”}” \textit{Warren Wiersbe, Be Confident}

I mentioned earlier that we shall inherit an unshakeable kingdom if we willingly receive God’s grace.
Let Us Have Grace (12:25-29)

Verse 25 - But grace is not conferred automatically whether we want it or not. God gives us the right to refuse it – though doing so is clearly an awful mistake. It is the same as rejecting God – turning away from Him who speaks from heaven.

Verses 26-27 The writer is trying to correct a common mistake we earthlings make. We often think of earthly material things as being stable, solid and “more real” than spiritual things.

In truth it’s exactly the opposite.
The things of heaven are much more stable, solid and real than the things of earth.
The things of this earth are fleeting and temporary.
They can be shaken, burned up, destroyed, disappear, become irrelevant.
Our buildings/monuments crack and someone needs to repair them.
And we people of this earth are also here only temporarily.
If our earthly treasure do last, they will eventually outlast us.
But God has better things for us – immovable, unshakeable and eternal.
They were made to last and they will always endure – even when the final “shaking” eventually takes place.
Notice that the text does not say “these things will not be shaken” as if it were still possible.
It says - They cannot be shaken; they are unshakeable.

Verse 28 And we are receiving an unshakeable kingdom, prepared for us by our Lord. We need to allow this to be a motivator for us in the day-to-day here and now.
Receive His grace.

Verse 29 - The grace of God does not negate the fear of God as if these two qualities of God were contradictory or polar opposites.
The two exist in tension – or perhaps better – in harmony with one another.
The same God that is a consuming fire is the God that offers us a river of life if we receive it on His terms.
Hebrews 12:18-29 Conclusions
We've gone through the passage quickly. There are four Lessons we can pull out of this passage:

1. The Fear of God.
2. The Grace of God.
3. The Importance of Receiving the Latter (Grace).
4. The Fact That We Are Eternal Beings Intended for an Eternal Kingdom.

1. The Fear of God.
   - If there is one mistake our generation makes regarding God, it is that we will forget that He is a God to be feared.
   - We have distorted the message of His love.
   - We think we are so smart, yet we've neglected “the beginning of wisdom.”
   - God is unchanging; He is still to be feared.
   - In fact, it is this healthy fear that helps us to begin to comprehend the actual grace that God offers.
   - Without the fear of God, God's love and grace simply turn Him into a friendly old man.
   - His love and grace lose all of their value, being reduced to sentimental twaddle.

2. The Grace of God.
   - The Israelites began to learn the fear of God at Mt. Sinai when they received the Ten Commandments through Moses.
   - It was a place of holy terror that could not be touched.
   - We have come to the glorious city of God’s grace, the heavenly Jerusalem which God offers us as our eternal home.
   - Our place there has been purchased by Christ’s blood.
   - Jesus Christ in going to the cross makes it possible for us to receive complete forgiveness.
   - He makes it possible for us to live as citizens of heaven even while we are still very much present here on earth.

3. The Importance of Receiving the Latter (i.e. Grace)
• The people who originally received this letter were being tested and tried.
• Their place here on earth would have been made more secure by rejecting Christ’s offer of grace.
• You may feel as if you are in a similar position.
• Perhaps you feel you have something to lose by becoming a Christian. In reality, you don’t.
• Genuine loss will only be experienced by those who have not received God’s grace.

4. The Fact That We Are Eternal Beings Intended for an Eternal Kingdom.
• God did not create us for sin and judgment.
• He created us in His image to enjoy an eternity with Him.
• Then came sin and the whole system became corrupted – and we die as a sad result.
• But God’s intentions are still the same.
• We are still eternal beings intended for an eternal kingdom, though we don’t often live with that reality in mind.
• We should really take one another more seriously in light of the shaking to come.

Consider these wise words from C.S. Lewis.

“It is a serious thing to … remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare …

All day long we are, in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics …

“There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors …

“This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously - no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption.” (C. S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory)
2 Peter 3:10-13
“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Can I say again - **We shall inherit an unshakeable kingdom if we willingly receive God’s grace.**

Are you interested? It’s a personal thing. Only you can accept it for yourself.

**CONCLUSION**

Have you accepted willingly God’s grace in your life? The Bible says that this is the only way to inherit this unshakeable kingdom. It is only possible through recognizing Jesus Christ and who He is, and his wonderful sacrifice for you.

The week long theme for Teen Street this year is that Jesus is unequalled. Unequalled in every aspect of our lives. This week 600+ young people will have the opportunity to recognize Jesus, the Son of God, for who He truly is (in the Gospel of Mark). They will have the Gospel presented to them. They have a chance to grasp and inherit this unshakeable kingdom.

When you depart this world, nothing you have accumulated will matter. Your money, your wealth, your position in life ... guess what? TEMPORARY.

So why do we bother with all of these things. The greater things are the things that are eternal, things of the Spirit. Things that will last. Our wealth is only found in the Cross.

God’s kingdom is what will be left.
Which side of God’s kingdom will you be on?
The side that is shaky, or the side that is unmovable that will last forever?

Jesus has something important to say about this. He tells the Parable of the Wise & Foolish builder – one who builds on sand (the temporary) – it looks good, beach view, sun, surf and pleasure, but the storms come and wipe it out. No foundation.
Temporary – it can be taken away so quick. Perhaps you have experienced this in your life.

But Jesus tells of another type of builder. One who builds on the solid rock – a life that is secure and can’t be moved, distracted or washed away. A life built upon the solid foundation of Jesus Christ – the One whose blood paid for our sins. Jesus tells this story to illustrate a better way to life.

An unshakeable kingdom ... and unshakeable life.

How shaky is your life today? Is it getting battered and washed away all the time? Full of anxiety? Is there uncertainty about the future? Do you know where you will be when you die?

If this is you, then there is an answer – it’s the loving arms of Jesus who has provided the way to the Father God, through the gracious gift of his life for ours. It’s a simple transaction but a costly one.

It costs us nothing to accept. His gift is a free gift. Do we want to accept it. (Free Sausage Sizzle for lunch today. You can hear about it, but you will never taste it or experience it until you take it into yourself and digest it and let it fill you.

An unshakeable Jesus – the only answer to this shaky and temporary world.

**Let’s Pray**

*Gracious God & our Heavenly Father, Just as your Word says today, we are to see to it that no one misses the grace of God. Today I pray that no one has missed how deceptive and fleeting this world can be. It’s only when we trust You that our lives make sense and then find purpose. Thank you for your words. May we digest them and live them, by putting our trust in Jesus. Encourage us on the journey of life, showing us your ways of grace, truth and love. Help us to build lives upon the fear and grace of God.*

*If there is anyone who feels that their life today is shaky, please speak to them, and reveal to them your Son Jesus who has won the victory of sin and death, and has given us an eternal destiny – an unshakeable future. Encourage us with this promise. Until you return for your people.*

*We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

**Closing Song ~ Refiner’s Fire (Purify my heart)**
Hebrews 12 (New International Version)

Warning and Encouragement

14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. 16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. 17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.

The Mountain of Fear and the Mountain of Joy

18 You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; 19 to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, 20 because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.” 21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.”

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

25 See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? 26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”
27 The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

29 for our “God is a consuming fire.”