

Familiarity Requires a Fresh Look

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Date: 31 August 2025

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everybody. My name is James. If you don't know me, I'm the assistant pastor here. Please do keep your Bibles open at Hebrews chapter 2. That's what we're looking at.

Give you a minute to get those Bibles back open. I just want to start with this question.

What we'll be thinking about today. What do we need when we're getting numb to Jesus? What do we need when we're getting numb to Jesus?

Now, let me just start by saying one really good sign when I started to come to this church and visit and see what you guys were like back in November. Remember, it was. So many of you are long time members.

Do you know why that's a really good sign? Because if you're a long time member, it means that you don't want to leave this church. You want to stay. It must be a good church to be at.

[1 : 03] But it also means something else. It means if you're a long time member, you're a long time Christian. And you know the thing about that is that being a long time Christian is a danger of over familiarity.

Now, if you've been a Christian for a while, just think about all those sermons that you sat through and listened to. Think about the amount of quiet times that you've enjoyed.

Think about the sheer amount of times that you have heard the gospel explained. Just think about how many times that is. Thousands probably. And it can really get to the point where you say to yourself, I know this.

I know this Jesus. I know this gospel. Bible reading, gospel hearing, it kind of goes a bit on autopilot, doesn't it?

It sort of washes over you. And then Jesus stops thrilling you. He stops exciting you. He stops surprising you. He stops compelling you.

[2 : 19] And you get a little bit numb. Now, if you're a new Christian, now, I just want to say that the initial excitement, well, it does wear off. And that might be a little bit scary for some of you, thinking, getting numb to Jesus.

Because it is a real danger, isn't it? Spiritual numbness stops you from listening. Have a look at verse 1. We didn't read this, but it's just one verse.

Chapter 2, verse 1. We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

There it is. The original readers here of this letter, this book, are long-time believers. And they're getting a little bit bored of Jesus.

And it says in chapter 5 that they're getting dull of hearing. And it's causing them to stop listening. To drift away from Jesus.

[3 : 25] To sin. To temptation. To the love of money. All the usual suspects. I think sometimes we treat spiritual numbness like it's kind of a, you know, it's a harmless phase we all go through.

You know, when you get mature as a Christian, that's just what happens. But it's not harmless, is it? There's a drifting that could happen. It's a real danger.

If we are complacent, we will drift. What do we need when we're getting numb to Jesus? Well, we've been in the Psalms over the summer.

And last week, you'll remember if you were here, Johan preached on Psalm chapter 8 from the Old Testament. But this week, we're going to see how the writer of the Hebrews preaches Psalm 8.

And as he does it, he's going to teach us how to keep on listening. Here's the answer. Familiarity requires a fresh look.

[4 : 31] Familiarity requires a fresh look. He takes the psalm they know. He takes the psalm that we know, because we just heard it last week. And he gets us to look at it afresh.

It's a model of how to do it. Widen your view of salvation and deepen your view of the Saviour. Firstly, we need a fresh, wider look at our on-high salvation. We need a fresh look at our on-high salvation. Let's read from verse 6.

Now, this is Psalm 8 from last week, isn't it?

And we saw what our place was in creation. God is on top. He bookends our lives, if you will. I love that illustration. But we were just made to rule just underneath.

[5 : 46] Crowned with glory. Now, others have pointed out that we're not just a little bit above the animals. We're just a notch below the angels. In God's massive creation, he cares about us that much.

Doesn't that give you amazing self-worth? We're God's caretakers, enjoying a sense of place and a sense of peace as we serve him and we rule under him.

But here's the thing. We don't see that happening now. We don't see it happening. The writer says, we're kings without a crown.

Look again at verse 8. Yet at present, we do not see everything in subjection to them. We do not see humanity ruling creation, subduing creation like we should.

It's all topsy-turvy. So it should be like this. So we're in the middle. That's the snake or the serpent. And we see this.

[6 : 58] Creation in chaos. Now, why is that? It's Genesis 3. It's the fall. Instead of us ruling over the animals, the serpent in the garden, saying no to him, we listen to the serpent.

And now Satan and sin and death rule. And John Piper, you might know this preacher, John Piper, one of my favourites. He makes this really keen observation on this, actually.

We think that we are ruling the world. We've got our skyscrapers. We've got our antibiotics. We've got our amazing luxury. We think we've made a pretty good world for ourselves.

We think we're on top. We're on top. But we're not on top. Death is on top. I think the stats are notoriously unreliable, aren't they?

But there's one stat that really is true. Here it is. 100% of people, I think you know what I'm going to say, die. That is the kind of grip that death has on us.

[8 : 02] When I lived in Windsor, King Charles used to live just up the road, actually. Very cool to say that, isn't it? He lived just up the road, up the hill in Windsor Castle.

But imagine, that's where he belongs, isn't it? But imagine seeing him begging on the side of the road. Well, that's kind of like us after the fall.

Meant to rule creation, subdue sin, Satan and death. But now we are kings without our crown. But this is where the familiar gets given a fresh look.

A wider view of our salvation. Have a look at verse 9. But we do see Jesus. We do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour.

Creation is out of joints. We're not on the throne. But the ascended Jesus is. He kind of comes, if you will, as humanity 2.0.

[9 : 14] To come down, to not sin, to say no to sin. Conquer sin, conquer death. And now he is qualified to sit at the right hand of God in glory and honour and rule.

In fact, he's doing nothing less than restoring creation to the order that it should be. Reordering creation. Reordering creation. A human back where they belong, ruling the cosmos.

But he didn't just do this for himself. That's the amazing thing about this. He did this so that he could share his crown with us. He did it so that we could rule creation too.

Verse 10. In bringing many sons and daughters to glory. That's where he is. He pioneers a way for any human now to come in with him.

If we trust him, his story is ours, isn't it? He rules the cosmos. So we will. He's restored to his rightful place.

[10 : 20] We will. He's the head of a restored creation. We're part of that too. Here we get a fresher, wider look at our salvation, don't we?

And this really is fresh, isn't it? When I say salvation, that word, what comes into your head as I say that? Probably the cross.

And that is a very good thing to happen. And that's right, isn't it? It's central. It's essential. But he gives us a bit of a wider view of our salvation than just the cross.

See where the cross takes you. I'm not just forgiving you. I'm forgiving you so that you can one day rule the cosmos with me.

And more than that, one day you can be swept up in my plan for a new creation. Salvation. Salvation. I think sometimes we think of it as a kind of set of backroom deals that happen.

[11 : 26] He pays the debt. He sends the receipt to me through the post. And what is wonderful that he does pay the debt. We mustn't say that we shouldn't think about that. But look at what he's doing. He's paying the debt.

And look at what we get caught up in. That's an amazing truth, I think, for a mundane, Monday morning. I was sitting at the dinner table last week.

This week, sorry. And I was kind of struggling to get the kids to eat their food. And I was just kind of thinking, you know, this again. You know, life just kind of goes around this. It feels quite mundane, doesn't it?

It's kind of after I finished sort of prepping my sermon as a sort of first draft. And I thought, you know, without Jesus, my life, actually everybody else's life, when you think about it, is quite mundane, isn't it?

I was sitting in the chair, where it was so mundane. And I thought, my position in Christ, in my future in him, is the furthest possible thing from being mundane.

[12 : 29] In him, I'm going to rule over sin and death. In him, I'm part of a restored, perfect new creation. The writer is teaching us how to take old truth like Psalm 8, and he gives them a fresh look.

He widens our salvation, our view of salvation, glorious on high. But next, he moves from a wider view to a deeper view, to a fresher, deeper look at our Saviour.

Our down-to-earth Saviour. Look at verse 9 with me. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while.

We've been thinking about how Jesus lifts us up to rule, but first he had to come low. Why? Because we've fallen low. We've fallen from glory.

To bring us up to glory, he had to come down to rescue us and to kind of scoop us back up. Look at verse 9. So that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone.

[13 : 43] The penalty of our sin deserves his death. The thing stopping us getting to glory, just going down, is death. It's stopping us getting there. So Jesus knew what he had to do.

He knew the mission. If he wanted to bring us to glory, he had to come down and defeat death, didn't he? And do it in a way where we wouldn't have to face it as the punishment of our sin.

He tastes death for us. The wonder of the incarnation. The Lord of glory doesn't shy away from our mess.

But he becomes fully human. He experiences our pain, doesn't he? He dies on our behalf to bring us to glory. What humility, what love that is. The down-to-earth saviour.

He's changing tack. He was going wider. Now he's going deeper. Deeper into the character of Jesus. And we need a deep view of the character of Jesus.

[14 : 47] Jesus. It's this deep view that keeps us listening. Because it's hard to listen to someone who acts like they're all high up and they're above you.

They're in their ivory tower, aren't they? Sometimes, these people. Too important to kind of come down and get their hands dirty. We don't want to listen to a person. I don't want to listen to a person like that.

Maybe that's who you think Jesus is. He's far away. He's watching us from afar. He's kind of indifferent to our situations that we're going through, our temptations, our suffering.

No. Not Jesus. The divine Lord, who deserves all the glory. Yet he's not too clean to get involved. To come down. The down-to-earth saviour. You might have heard of this preacher called John Stott. Very famous preacher of the 20th century.

[15 : 50] He was a really powerful man. He had a lot of influence. He was head of a big church. But apparently, what he used to do, right? He used to go out onto the streets of London at night. And he would purposely look a little bit shabby.

He looked a bit like a homeless person. And he would sleep on the streets to kind of know what it was like. This is a picture of someone who cares about people, isn't it?

This is a picture of someone who, if I didn't know that, but then knew that, I would listen to his sermon much more carefully. I'd want to listen to him.

How much more would Jesus? From this alone, I know that Jesus isn't indifferent to the suffering I face, the temptation I face. I know whatever plan he has for me, whatever way he sets up life, well,

that's a good thing.

Because he's down to earth. He's a down to earth saviour. I want to listen. So you're like this. It's not just that he came down to earth.

[16:56] He is down to earth, isn't he? He's relatable. In fact, he's so relatable. Jesus is your brother.

Look at verse 11. There's lots of stuff here, actually, but there's one key thing. Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family.

So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. He says, verse 12, I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters. In the assembly, I will sing your praises.

Let that sink in. Let that sink in. Jesus is your brother, if you trust him. He's your brother, not just your Lord, not even just your saviour.

Jesus is your brother. When did you last think about Jesus as your brother? When did you last pray to Jesus as your brother?

[18:02] He does whatever any good brother would do, actually. He cares for his fellow brothers. Verse 10. In bringing many sons and daughters, his brothers, to glory.

He takes hold of us and he brings us home. It's a bit like this story. You might have heard this. It's a great story, isn't it?

Yeah, I'll tell it now. So basically, there's these two runners. They're brothers. In one race, one of them's ahead. And he's really near the finish line. He's going to win.

But then he collapses last minute. And the stronger brother, he does something only a brother would do. He takes hold of him, like in that picture. And he makes sure that he gets to the finish line at the cost of himself winning the race.

That's what our brother, Jesus, does for us. He carries us limping, struggling to the finish line. And he takes us all the way to glory.

[19:09] And maybe this, I think, we can get over-familiar, too familiar with Jesus. We've got bored of him. Maybe you only know him as the divine Lord.

The one with all authority. The one who makes all the rules. And just so you know, that's true. But to only know him as that could make him seem aloof.

Unapproachable. The big boss you begrudgingly obey. The one with his feet up on the desk. Fold his arms. Chuck a little sweet tooth into his mouth. Let everyone else do the work. That's kind of what picture that I think isn't Jesus.

That's not Jesus. There's more to him. There's a deeper view that you might not naturally consider. Divine Lord. Brother beside you.

Divine Lord completely understands you. The enthroned one. But he carries you home. The person of Jesus is not shallow.

[20:12] He's wonderfully close, isn't he? He's our brother. Our down-to-earth saviour. So we started with this question, didn't we?

Why do we need... Sorry, what do we need when we're getting numb to Jesus? We started seeing that it was a real danger. If Jesus isn't compelling us enough, something else will be compelling us to listen.

And we'll drift from Jesus to that other thing. I remember hearing a preacher in London, someone I highly respect, talk about this passage.

And he used to know a student, someone he served in his congregation, who'd happily sit under his preaching and other people's preaching on Sunday. He'd listen to the sermons. But the rest of the week, he'd be sleeping around with other women.

Not living God's way. And he said that whatever he was taking away from his time on Sunday, it had no weight.

[21:18] It's not compelling enough, whatever he was hearing, to keep him away from temptation. And that's the issue, isn't it? If Jesus, if Jesus we think we know, is thin, he's one-dimensional, well, he's not going to be compelling.

Sin will be more compelling. The gospel needs to be wide enough. The gospel needs to be deep enough so that we want to listen.

It needs to have that weight. And that's exactly what we get modelled here, isn't it? He shows us that we need to go wider.

He expands our view of salvation. It's more than a set of backroom deals. It's creation renewal. It's ruling the cosmos. And he shows us that we need to go deeper.

He's your brother, Jesus. You're down-to-earth saviour. So here's the challenge. Are you content with the fat-free gospel?

[22 : 30] Fat-free is good. Everything else in life, isn't it? Especially with me at the moment. I'm trying that. But not with Jesus. Are you content with being in that position of over-familiarity?

Where are you going wider and deeper? Because we're happy to do that in our careers, our personal lives, to get better, to become the better you.

Is that something we think that we need to do with Jesus? Have we got them all figured out? Well, let me encourage you. In your quiet time, in the sermons you listen to, in the passage you've read 50 times, don't settle.

Don't be content with a thin Jesus. He won't keep you listening. Take a fresh look. Pray for a wider view of salvation.

Don't shy away from meaty, deep theology that stretches you. Pray for a deeper view of Jesus.

Don't shy away from a Jesus who's tender and caring.

[23 : 46] Don't leave until you've mined for gold and found gold. When we're none to Jesus, familiarity requires a fresh look.

Let me pray. Father, there's so much to your son. There's so much to the gospel.

And Lord, we confess that we sometimes think that we know it all. And we've got to the bottom of Jesus. Lord, please help us.

And convict us that we don't know, we haven't plumbed depths. Help us to go wider. Help us to go deeper. We pray that in Jesus' name.

Amen.