

The Reset - Being Inspired by Jesus

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[0 : 00] Good morning. That wasn't that cheery, but we'll let it go. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

I don't know about you, but one of the family gatherings we had at Christmas, we had some crackers, Christmas crackers. I think they're going out of fashion. Everyone thinks it just goes in the bin and it's an ecological waste.

But in this moment, we had crackers and we had particularly inspiring Christmas cracker jokes. That was a joke. I don't know if you caught any of these. Three of them stood out for me.

What do you call an old snowman? Water. Very good, very good. We obviously bought the same pack. What, what, why does Santa Claus go down the chimney? It soots him. I know, I know, I know. It gets worse.

So what never eats Christmas dinner? The turkey. It's stuffed. And the last point of pain that I'll give you this morning, well, maybe not, I'm about to speak, but the last joke would be, what do you get if you cross Father Christmas with a detective?

[1 : 22] Santa Claus. I know, I know. Forgive me, forgive me. Yes. So no wonder when you have jokes like that and after Christmas, you're kind of ready for something new, a new chapter. And actually, this is a period of reset, Twixmas, as Emma said to me this morning, a moment when we start to think about the year gone and we consider the year to come. And so a natural moment to think about what would I hope for in this coming year. And it's certainly what happens if you are on any social media or if you're looking on YouTube or I think on adverts, on television as well, if you're streaming, is that there's so many people now selling what's next for your next chapter, a reset, reset. One that I read said, five minutes to transform your life. Maybe Jesus can do that, but I think the 50 press-ops it was recommending a day probably wouldn't. Another one that I got an email said, are you ready for an adventure that will change your life? Dot, dot, dot. Would you like to swim 10K in a river? No, I don't think so. We'll skip that one. We'll skip one. But a sense of reset, reset. And it's actually quite remarkable as psychologists and neuroscientists analyze the body, the brain, the gut, and how we have a natural capacity for reset. Overnight, our bodies are resetting so many of our systems that even emotionally, overnight, things often change for us and we can get fresh perspective. And a psychologist recently said to me, it normally takes one and a half days if you have that sort of sting of irritation and anger for an interaction, one and a half days. Normally, you're then in a position to take a fresh perspective. Lots of different sense of reset.

And of course, an ultimate reset that we know in Jesus. A reset with a life knowing forgiveness and grace and grace and a new chapter. So as we, this morning in Twixmas, pause, it's a moment for us to consider what kind of reset might we want with God as we go into the new year. And Hebrews is really a resetting book. The author is a new year. And there's a consistent theme of clarifying, being clear, stating the truth of Jesus. It's resetting for them as they start to fall back into Old Testament ways, under pressure, the truth of Jesus. Essentially, there's two themes. Jesus is God. And secondly,

Jesus is the source of salvation. And by the grace of God, as it says in chapter 2, verse 9, that Christ experienced death for us and it is through the wisdom of God that such a death saves humankind. And that's what we're going to explore a little this morning. Now, in Hebrews, there are lots of verses that will be familiar to anyone who's been a Christian for any long period of time, such as in chapter 2, verse 5, what is man that you are mindful of him? Chapter 4, verse 12, for the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. In chapter 11, now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. In chapter 12, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us with perseverance run the race marked out for us.

As I read that, it reminded me that in university, I used to wear this Christenton sport t-shirt that had that verse on the back and I sort of intentionally sat near the front of a large lecture theatre so my fellow students could see those words. And I think, as I look now, I think I'm slightly embarrassed about my boldness, but also quite impressed by my boldness about trying to tell people about Jesus, both at the same time.

So as we consider what new fitness regime we might be taking on board, what new way of operating with our families we think might bring health and flourishing, let's really consider what the Holy Spirit might be nudging us to do as a reset with God.

[6 : 28] And I just want to share three themes from these verses that Margaret read to us. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus as the source for salvation.

And Jesus sets us free. So why don't we just pray and let's just pause before God. Allow the Holy Spirit to stir our hearts. Our Lord, we come before you and ask that you would use this moment and this time to speak to us.

Stir our hearts. Tune our ears to you. And I pray that only what you want to bring to life would land today from what I share.

You would guide these words, Holy Spirit. And meet with us. In your name, Lord Jesus. Amen. So the first theme, Jesus as the Son of God.

So this whole book is really this reset, this narrative, that states clearly Jesus is God, not just a prophet.

[7 : 46] And the writer makes this abundantly clear at the very beginning, at the start of chapter one, with these words. In the past, God spoke to our forefathers, through the prophets, at many times and in various ways.

But in these last days, he's spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance, God's glory, and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

After he provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. This might sound like pretty standard fare if you believe in the Trinity, but this, it was a very clear statement of the sovereignty of Jesus, a recorrecting of those at this time who were falling back into traditional Jewish practices.

Jesus is the exact representation of God, his statement. And what I really noticed is that there are some Christian writers today who are very compelling, very quite inspiring writing, but actually are just starting to write out Jesus from the story and have a compelling narrative about spirituality and seeking God, but without this simple truth that we believe in this church, that Jesus is God.

And through his death, through his resurrection, we find forgiveness for our sins and the promise of an eternity with God. Well, let's just consider what that might mean for us and take a moment to consider what is being stirred in you as you hear this clarification of who Jesus is.

[10 : 03] The second theme, Jesus as the source of salvation. So the word salvation is used seven times here in Hebrews, it's six in Acts, five times in Romans.

And so it is clearly part of the narrative of correction of the access to God is through Jesus, made possible by his death and his resurrection.

What stands out for me, particularly in verse 10 is a reference to suffering. It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

So in here is the narrative of Jesus being fully God, but fully human. And you can read throughout the gospel of the suffering that Jesus experienced.

What I really noticed, particularly as I read this, is that it isn't Jesus kind of going to the motions of being human. It's not Jesus suddenly anesthetized or cushioned by the Holy Spirit, but truly encountering physical, emotional suffering.

[11 : 17] In the same way that the Old Testament priest would sacrifice an animal as an atonement for their own and the people's sins and do that repeatedly, we see here Jesus becoming that ultimate sacrifice to break the power of sin and death and give us access to forgiveness, grace, healing, and purpose.

And we see this predicted so clearly in Isaiah, Isaiah 53, 5. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

The punishment that brought us peace was on him. And by his wounds, we are healed. I remember as an altar server in the Catholic Church where you would ring the bell at key moments, set up the altar, carry candles, and set up and sort of pack down of a mass in the morning that we at Easter would do the Stations of the Cross and around the church that I was in in Cheltenham were really vivid depictions of the journey from Jesus being arrested, arrested, accused, hung on the cross through to resurrection.

And these bold pieces of art we would reflect on as we walk around. I remember even then being struck by how this individual suffering for Jesus was an expression of love for us.

These verses in Hebrews are a statement that salvation is in, through, and with Jesus.

[13 : 02] That Jesus is the Saviour and there's no other name by which salvation occurs. We see that repeated in Acts 4 and Acts 2.

And this is described later on in Hebrews, chapter 7, verse 26. Such a high priest meets our need. One who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted from the heavens.

Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day for his own sins and then for the sins of the people.

He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. Let us pause, take a moment and consider what we're noticing, what the Holy Spirit is prompting us as we consider about Jesus paying the price for our sins and that promise of salvation.

So the third theme that stood out for me that I just want to share is this idea of being set free by Jesus.

[14 : 25] And in verses 14 to 18, we see Jesus identifying with our humanity. Not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters that we are children of God.

And it really is the new covenant. It's like a new testament to the love, grace and involvement of Jesus in our lives. And then it's explicit.

Freedom here from sin, death and the devil. And death is clearly identified as the fruit of sin.

And this promise of the possibility of an eternal life with God through forgiveness. And so we see Jesus in the Gospels saying the devil is a murderer, a liar and thief.

And later in Hebrews, we read this challenge to us about our maturity, about discerning inner spirit. From chapter 5, verse 12.

[15 : 35] In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again.

You need milk, not solid food. Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with a teaching about righteousness.

but solid food is for the mature who, by constant use, have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

I remember a friend of mine who did work in banks said that the tellers, you know, the people working at the tills in banks wouldn't get, spent a lot of time looking at counterfeit money.

but they handled the real thing so much of the time, almost the moment they put their hand on something counterfeit, they could tell. I think it's a good analogy for us to sense of how we're engaging personally, closely, intimately with God so we can spot sooner the tricks, traps, and lies of the enemy.

[16 : 51] So we read in verse 16 that Jesus is faithful and merciful high priest in God's service. He's proven to be faithful and trustworthy to us.

And so for me there's evidence that Jesus would pay the price for us. Suffer, die, to be risen again is such a bold commitment to us that we can be assured of God's involvement, care, faithfulness, desire to support and intervene in our lives in the now.

As you read in Matthew 7, 9, which of you if your son asks for bread will give him a stone? How much more will your father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask them?

And what's clear in these verses is Jesus shares in our suffering. The readers of this letter at this time are facing persecution and suffering and there's an encouragement to know that they can connect with a living God who also suffered and can understand their struggles.

And I think the same for us as we face challenges, as we face wrestles, as we face pain, that actually we can turn to a God who can understand, guide us and response.

[18 : 19] One of the books I read through as I was preparing for this this morning was written by Raymond Brown. He used to be the principal of Spurgeon's College in London which used to train Baptist ministers.

Jesus. And at the end of his notes he just wrote this line I want to share with it. The one who endured the world's greatest suffering, the bearing of human sin and separation from God and yet triumphed is certainly able to help anyone who turns to him.

He's able to do far more for us than we would ever dare to pray about or even think about. So as we are in this liminal stage I heard that on Lectio this morning and thought I think I know what it means but I'd better look it up to be sure.

This in-between stage of Christmas and New Year as we're thinking about what has been and we're thinking about what's to come let's just take a moment to pray and seek God's hand on our lives where we most need the Holy Spirit's assistance involvement wisdom grace healing touch let's just pause and then we'll pray together Holy Spirit we ask you would meet with us as we pause before you in this moment on this morning we thank you for the promises in these verses that you are a God who cares demonstrated by your own sacrifice on earth demonstrated by your gift of forgiveness demonstrated by your involvement in our lives now we ask

Holy Spirit that you would speak to us Lord you'd respond to the prayers and the calls of our hearts that we are holding right now for breakthrough in our families for strength to face challenges for peace and repair in relationships for healing touch of the living God for inspiration for the next step in our lives to know your love and your peace in a deeper and more profound way than ever before there's a blessing later in Hebrews and I know we normally do a blessing at the end and it will but I wanted to read this to close off this moment may the God of peace who is with the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus that great shepherd of the sheep equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus

[21 : 58] Christ to whom be glory forever and ever and we pray this in Jesus name Amen