

Our Great High Priest

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 December 2021

Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] Jesus is many things to us. He's our Savior. He's our Messiah, our King. He's the Son of God.

He's the Son of Man. We've been learning over the last little while through John's Gospel about how He is our Good Shepherd and the gate, the way, the truth, the life, the resurrection, the light of the world.

God's provision from heaven, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He is so precious and He is many things to us.

But this morning as we come to the Lord's table, we want to consider how Jesus is our High Priest. The author of Hebrews is the one who in his letter to the Hebrews has the most to say about this. So we're going to be looking at a few different places in his letter to the Hebrews to focus a little more on how Jesus is our High Priest. The author of Hebrews first brings this up in Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14 to 17.

[1 : 20] He says this, Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity, so that by his death, he might break the power of him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason, he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. The author of Hebrews has a way of saying a lot about everything in very few words, and he doesn't usually stick to just one topic at a time. He weaves his topics all together and expands upon all of them, all the way through his letter.

So there'll be lots that we skip over today in order to trace out this theme of Jesus is our High Priest. The first thing that we learn is that Jesus came to share in our humanity.

John said it at the beginning of his Gospel, that the Word who was with God and was God became flesh and dwelt among us. This is the author of Hebrews saying the same thing in his own words.

[2 : 51] He too shared in their humanity. Just as the children have flesh and blood, so he too, Jesus, came to have flesh and blood.

So Jesus, verse 17, continues on with this thought. For this reason, he had to be made like them, fully human in every way.

So Jesus was not just partly, not just outwardly human. He was not just flesh and blood exterior or body with divine insides.

No. The author of Hebrews says that he had to be made like us in every way, like his brothers in every respect, in all things, fully human.

Why? Well, there's multiple reasons given, but the one we want to see this morning is in verse 17. For this reason, he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

[4 : 13] The high priest in the Old Testament was the go-between, the one who would offer sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people. Our sin and our guilt is an awful thing.

It makes us unworthy even to come near to God's presence. It makes us unworthy even to speak to God on our own. And so God instituted a priesthood.

Men who were to live especially pure and holy and righteous lives, and who would stand in the gap between God and people, who would speak to God on behalf of the people, who would offer sacrifices of atonement for the people.

The high priest was like a representative. He represented the people to God. And in order to do this job, you have to be one of the people. You might think of it like an ambassador for foreign affairs. How can you be an ambassador for your country if you're not even a citizen of that country? You can't. It's a similar kind of thing here. The only way to carry out this needed service of priest is to be one of the people whom you serve.

[5 : 29] And as the author of Hebrews will tell us all throughout this book, the priests who descended from Aaron and Levi could only do so much for the people. There was need for a better, a greater high priest than could ever come from Aaron or his sons.

And so God sent his son, the word, into our world to take on flesh and blood, to share in our humanity in every respect so that we could have the high priest that we most desperately needed. One of us who would serve us mercifully with compassion and one who would serve God and see that what God desired would be done for his people and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

These are such humbling words. Do you realize that you cannot come to God on your own behalf? You cannot make atonement for your own sins.

We have need of someone to do it for us. Someone who does not share in our guilt and yet is one of us having flesh and blood as we have.

[6 : 56] chapter 3, verse 1. Therefore, he says, holy brothers and sisters who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.

We're not going to talk about apostle today, but high priest. He says, fix your thoughts on Jesus. Think about him. consider him.

He's the one who we confess. He's the one who we acknowledge as our high priest. Fix your thoughts on him right now. And then the author of Hebrews goes on to tell us about how Jesus was faithful to God.

God appointed him and he was faithful to the one who appointed him. He tells us that Jesus was more faithful more worthy of honor than even Moses was.

And then he reminds us of how God related to the Israelites long ago in the days of Moses. He reminds us of how the Israelites rebelled against God.

[8 : 12] They tested God. They tried God. Their hearts were always going astray. They were often acting like they didn't even know God. And so God punished them.

He forbid a whole generation of them from entering the rest of the promised land. These words make me tremble because in many ways we're more like the Israelites than unlike them.

Aren't we? Prone to complaining, grumbling, hearts always going astray, even at times doing the things that we know are wrong or choosing not to do the things that we know are good and right. The author of Hebrews turns to his readers and even to us and he pleads with us. Don't be like them. If you hear God's voice speaking to you, he says, do not harden your hearts like they did in the wilderness.

He says, see to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful and unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

[9 : 30] But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Sin is still a big problem even for us who know the Lord.

It can deceive. It can harden our hearts. It's constantly there inviting us to turn away from God.

And it's not just the bad things that we do or the good things that we fail to do. It's even the inward thoughts and attitudes of our heart where sin continues to hold sway in our lives.

A little later in chapter 4, the author of Hebrews says this to us, verse 12. He says, the word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.

It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

[10 : 38] Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Sin is a great problem for us. He tells us that one day we will all have to give an account for everything the Lord has watched us do.

Say and even think and desire the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. And this is why we need an even greater high priest.

He goes on in chapter 4, verse 14. He says, therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet without sin.

[12:07] Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

We have a great sin problem just like the Israelites of long ago, yes, but we have an even greater high priest than the Israelites ever did back then, Jesus, the Son of God.

Listen to what it says about him. It says, because he is a high priest, truly human as we are, he is able to empathize with our weaknesses.

That's precious, isn't it? Jesus understands the feebleness and the fickleness of our human hearts, how emotions come and emotions go, how one minute we're eager to do what is good and the next minute we feel the desire of the temptation to do what is not.

And yet amazingly, Jesus never once gave in to temptation. He never once sinned. Sometimes as we hear this, we might think, well, if Jesus never sinned or he never had sin in his heart, how could he possibly know what it's like to feel tempted the way that I do?

[13:38] temptation, it is true that temptation came to Jesus in a different sort of way, never out of a sinful heart because his heart was pure.

And yet, just as the author of Hebrews tells us, the temptations that he felt were just as real, just as same strength and the same power.

He had the same creaturely weaknesses that we have, hunger, fatigue, thirst, bodily discomfort, pain from wounds, itches that call to be scratched.

And he had a whole other set of temptations that we do not have, the temptation to take hold of what was rightfully his, the temptation not to lay down his life and suffer and go to the cross.

Because Jesus never gave in to temptation, he knows its strength, its full strength and full power even better than we do. And that's the kind of high priest that we need, isn't it?

[14:55] One who understands our weaknesses, one who understands just what we're going through, one who understands why we are coming back yet again to seek God's forgiveness.

And notice what it says here. He doesn't say, because we have Jesus, a great high priest, we can come back to God for grace and forgiveness an extra 100 times in our lives before we are cut off. We almost expect him to say that sometimes, don't we? me, but he says the opposite. He says, since we have a great high priest, Jesus, the son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. Let us approach God's throne with confidence. Do you hear that? This is the same God who struck people dead in past times for their sin.

This is the same God who you did not dare to set a toe into the most holy place of his temple unless you were the high priest, and that only once a year with the blood of a sacrifice.

[16:14] But now, since we have Jesus for our high priest, let us approach God's throne, his throne, with confidence, like right into his presence.

Even the mention of God's throne after reading through the Old Testament again this year, strikes a chord of fear into my heart. It's from there that God rules.

It's from there that God gives out his righteous judgments upon sinners like you and me. And yet, because of Jesus, our high priest, God's throne is now for us a throne of grace, a place where God gives generously to us, gives blessing, gives favor.

so long as your heart is firmly set on Jesus, your high priest, the one who has made atonement for you, walk right in to the presence of God and find the gifts of grace that you need, the help that you need, he says, the mercy, the forgiveness that you need, so that we may receive mercy and grace to help us in our time of need.

And I love how general that is. In our time of need, what time of need? Any time of need. Are you in need of forgiveness for sins that you've committed?

[18:04] Come to the throne of grace. Are you feeling weary and worn? come to the throne of grace. Are you feeling lonely and despairing?

Come to the throne of grace. Feeling anxious or worried, come to God's throne of grace. Feeling tempted to sin, come to God's throne of grace.

What's your need this morning? Whatever it is, come to God's throne of grace and find grace and help in your time of need.

Because of Jesus, you are welcome in God's presence. More than welcome, you are invited. More than invited, you are urged strongly to come in.

Jesus, our high priest, has secured that privilege for us on our behalf.

[19 : 20] The author of Hebrews then goes on to compare Jesus to the priests of Levi. Just as the priests of Levi, Jesus too was appointed by God.

He was called by God to the special role of service on our behalf. He too is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray because he himself has been subject to human weakness.

He too is familiar with pain and suffering. But, says the author of Hebrews, Jesus is a greater high priest than Aaron or his sons ever could be.

He's of a different and much superior order of priests altogether. And, he's not like the priests of Levi who lived and died and then a new one would be appointed and then die and then a new one would be appointed and then die.

No, he tells us Jesus has become a high priest forever. Not on the basis or regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.

[20 : 27] Chapter 6 verse 20 He has become a high priest forever. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind you are a priest forever.

Chapter 7 verse 23 Now there have been many of those priests since death prevented them from continuing in office. That's the priests of Levi.

But because Jesus lives forever he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them.

Such a high priest truly meets our need. One who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

[21 : 49] I love these words so much. This arrangement that we have with Jesus as our great and better high priest, this arrangement is permanent.

Jesus will always be there for us. You are a priest forever. Not just standing in the gap between God and us, but permanently bridging the gap forever.

Such that there really is in a sense, now no gap. We may come to Jesus and there is nothing to prevent us from coming right to God, right into his presence.

The curtain separating the most holy place was torn from top to bottom when Jesus offered his sacrifice on our behalf.

The way is open to God forever. And Jesus, he says, will always be there to intercede for us. And what's surprising, at least from the perspective of the Old Testament, is the sacrifice that Jesus, our high priest, offered.

[23 : 03] He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. It's not the body and blood of an animal slain that atones for our sins, but the body and blood of the priest himself.

Jesus offered himself, priest and sacrifice. Chapter 9, verse 11. But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation.

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but he entered the most holy place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

The sacrifice that Jesus offered was himself, his own body and blood, broken and shed to atone for our sins. And not just to atone for them temporarily or until the next time that we sin, but to atone for them once for all, obtaining for us eternal redemption, case closed, it is finished, saved forever.

A little further down in that same chapter, verse 25 of chapter 9. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again the way the high priest enters the most holy place every year with blood that is not his own.

[24 : 51] Otherwise, Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he, Christ, has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Once for all. Do you hear that? If you have come to Jesus and have Christ as your high priest, he has done away with your sin once for all, for all time, by the sacrifice of himself.

Chapter 10, verse 11. Day after day, every priest stands and performs his religious duties. Again and again, he offers the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But when this priest, referring to Jesus, had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

And since that time, he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice, he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

[26 : 03] I know I've skipped over so much here. we don't have time to look at all of it, but we have a better high priest than any of the Levites ever could have been. He has offered a better sacrifice than they could ever offer.

He offered that sacrifice in the greater and more perfect tabernacle in heaven, and by doing this, Jesus secured for us a better covenant, a better arrangement with God for the rest of eternity. again, the author of Hebrews now turns to his readers, to us, and pleads with us. Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way open for us through the curtain, that is his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings.

I love these words. Since we have all this, a great high priest, and all that he has done for us, what should we do? Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with full assurance by faith. Let me ask you this. Do you want to be close to God? Do you want to have a close friendship relationship with God?

[27 : 51] You can. we can because of what Jesus, our high priest, has done in service of us.

And so draw near. Come to him. As we come to the Lord's table this morning, we come not only to remember a perfect lamb who was slain, but also a great high priest who went to work on our behalf.

a great high priest who had flesh and blood just as we do and who offered that flesh and blood in sacrifice for our sins so that we would be redeemed forever.

The juice that we are about to drink represents Jesus' blood. The bread, his body. in just a few moments, Charles and Rod are going to come forward and they're going to serve the bread and the cup.

And if you've put your trust in Jesus as your great high priest, then please partake with us.

Celebrate with us. We'll wait until everybody who wishes to partake has been served and then we'll eat and drink all together in unison.

[29 : 14] But in these next few moments of quiet reflection, before we serve the elements, I just want to invite you, whether for the first time or for the thousandth time, to draw near to God and put your trust in Jesus, our great high priest again.

Maybe there's sins that you need to confess and ask forgiveness for. Maybe there's a particular weakness or failing in your life that you need to ask God for help with.

Maybe there's some kind of other need, totally different that you have. Maybe you just want to express your love and thanksgiving and praise to God.

The way is open. Draw near with a sincere heart. Come to the throne of grace in these next moments in quiet prayer. Jesus, our high priest, has made that possible.

study with young people, a break from socks.

[30 : 34] After keepingiti publishediox.com Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[33 : 06] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.