

Where are you running to?

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Preacher: Andrew Wilkinson

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. So we're going to be reading from Hebrews chapter 4, starting at verse 14 and going through to chapter 5, verse 10. Since then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.

Let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

Because of this, he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins, just as he does for those of the people.

And no one takes this honour for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also, Christ did not exhort himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, You are my Son, today I have begotten you.

[1 : 2 6] As he says also in another place, You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of all eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Thank you, everyone. There we go, I'm on. We couldn't have actually, I don't think we could have actually matched a better song with this passage today, so thanks, Musos. Well, two years ago, a remarkable survival story took place in the depths of the Amazon jungle.

A light aircraft travelling with three adults and four kids just nosedived into the dense jungle in Colombia. All three adults died, sadly died pretty quickly, leaving four kids behind, all under 13 years of age, alone and fighting the odds to survive.

The Colombian government mobilised a rescue force of elite commandos, indigenous trackers and sniffer dogs as well. And the search team looked everywhere for them, but they couldn't find them initially.

[3 : 0 6] In fact, it took them two weeks just to find the plane, only to realise the kids might still be alive. Then they used helicopters to fly over a vast area, and they had these mega speakers on the helicopters to broadcast a message from the children's grandmother, trying to encourage the kids to stay close to water, to stay safe.

Forty days, 40 days after the plane crash, an indigenous tracker found all four kids barely alive, only five kilometres from the plane.

After they received medical treatment, following the rescue, they uncovered why it had taken so long for the rescuers to find the kids. Even though they found clues along the way, like clothing items and footprints, it took them so long to find them.

What they found out was they discovered before the accident, events had happened in their home life that meant the children were scared to go back home. So instead of running to the comfort and the safety of rescuers, they chose to hide the fear of their own life, because they thought things would get worse, not better, being found.

Well, we've been digging into the book of Hebrews in recent weeks, and we've heard about the temptation present for Jewish believers at the time to turn and run from their faith as they experienced hardship and trial.

[4 : 30] Just like the four kids hiding from the rescue team, the Jewish believers were tempted to give up on the safety that they could find in Jesus. And, you know, I think we find ourselves very much in common with the Jewish believers here in Hebrews, and the kids as well in the story.

In fact, we don't actually get a lot of detail in Hebrews on what this difficult situation was about. It looks like God's actually deliberately left it that way for us. But those Jews in Hebrews, these kids, they're not so different to us, are they?

They're not so different to us. They got anxious and scared about their future, and they could get down about their present trials and temptations. Don't we do just the same thing? Perhaps you might think, and some people might argue, look, life's pretty good here in Australia.

Like, you know, we can just whinge and complain about life. It's an Australian thing to do. Well, in many ways, we've got a great country. Like, you know, we can worship with freedom.

We have some incredible tools and devices. Who doesn't have an Android or an iPhone or something like that? And we've got this super easy access nearly to whatever we want. Like, you can go online and watch a movie.

[5 : 42] You can online shop. You can go into the shops and get just about any food that you'd like these days. Yet, for all that, this generation is now being called the anxious generation.

And family relationships and separations are in free fall. It's the worst it's ever been in our country. And we're living in a very individualistic and modern... ..a very individualistic society in our modern era.

We have more ways to be connected than ever before, yet so many people are feeling so disconnected and lonely. So today, what we're doing is we're looking at why Jesus is better, why he's always worth running to, and why we can run to Jesus even when we think life is a total mess. Because even when we think life is a total mess, Jesus still gets it. He understands and he can deal with us gently because of who he is. And we're going to go through four reasons today that that's the case.

Those four points are, Jesus was sinless and resisted all temptation. He's gentle and he can sympathise with our weakness. He was raised to life and appointed to rescue us.

[6 : 52] And he has modelled to us how to run to the Father even when it comes to life or death. Well, if you've got your Bibles there, let's start by turning to verse 14.

Let's jump straight in. It says this, Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God. Let us hold fast our confession.

You'll notice, firstly, we have this powerful term. Jesus references himself as the great high priest. Now, I'm not sure for you, but I actually struggled in preparing for this to engage with this concept of priest.

Yet, the further into this passage I went, it just became more and more clear. It's critical. For our understanding of Jesus, we need to know what that means. It's another dimension to who he is. And he's not just a high priest. He is the great high priest. So, what's so hard about getting the idea of a high priest? Firstly, it's a bit like a foreign language to us.

[7 : 58] You know, when we think of priest, we tend to think orthodoxy, institution, like the Catholic Church or the High Anglican Church. And, look, let's just call it, if we said priest bot or priest Calderwood, you'd probably have a laugh, right?

You'd probably think, that's a bit weird. Dave Calderwood wouldn't be too impressed by that either. I think people have tried that on him. But, look, when we think of these institutions, like the Catholic Church or that High Anglican Church, it's hard not to consider recent history, isn't it?

It's really hard. The spotlight has been put on priests for their abuse of their power and positions, most recently the sex abuse scandal that the Royal Commission brought into light.

And it's done real damage to the view of clergy. And might I even say, the use of the name priest might even feel a little bit repulsive to us. So to try and get a clear picture and try and understand what we talk about with Old Testament priests and Jesus being the great high priest, we are talking about an extremely unique role, a holy calling at a time and place that God chose in history.

And it was this time in history, the Israelite people in the Old Testament, he showed his grace in a unique way towards his people by having a selected person to represent the people to him.

[9 : 17] It was all about God's grace and mercy. And that's why the priests were installed as mediators. Yet for all the priests that came and went in Israel, the good and the bad, there was a common problem that plagued them all.

And you see it as we touch down in 4 verse 15 and 5 verse 3. They understood the weakness of the people stuck in sin, but they couldn't escape that same weakness themselves.

Even they had to sacrifice for their own sins every single year. And Jesus, he was like these priests, but he was different. He is the ultimate, the great high priest because he is totally sinless.

So we can run to Jesus because he is sinless and he resisted all temptation. Follow me with this in Hebrews 4.15 where it says he is genuinely able to sympathise with our weakness.

Now there is a real emphasis here and it picks up along these lines. It's basically saying that because Jesus resisted all temptation, he can sympathise with us like no other priest could have ever done before him.

[10:32] In fact, like no other person ever has. Because in every respect, Jesus has been tempted. Meaning in every single way, he has known temptation, but he's never given in.

So he's in the perfect position to understand exactly what you and I are going through today. Well, someone might argue, well, look, Jesus never gave in to sin.

So how does he really actually know what it felt like? Well, in the story I told you earlier about the kids surviving in the Amazon, the oldest child, a 13-year-old girl, is credited with keeping alive her younger siblings.

They were nine, four, and 11 months. Look at that, an 11-month-year-old survived 40 days. So when she was interviewed after the event, she said at one point she was tempted to walk out and leave the three of them.

And she did. She left briefly for 20 minutes, but then she came back. Now, for the sake of her own survival, she would have known it would have been easier to make it alive without them.

[11:39] She was having to share the food. They had to split it between them. But she never would have known. If she walked away, she never would have known what it would have been like 10 minutes later, an hour later, or a day later.

So to this day, probably better than anyone here in this room, she would understand how great the temptation can be to sacrifice your own family for yourself. She would know that better than all of us.

It's just like this with Jesus, right? He never laid down or walked away. He endured without giving up. So therefore, he knows the strength of temptation better than any of us.

And it's only because he can better understand temptation that he can sympathise with us like no one else ever could. Now, the word sympathise here is key.

We need to understand it. It's the basic idea. It's the joining of two words, and that is with and to suffer. So it's not just a feeling. Sympathise is not just a feeling.

[12:42] It often gets thought of that way. It's actually a depth of togetherness in pain. It's saying in our pain, Jesus is pained. Not that he is threatened by it.

He's not threatened by it. He's God. But in the sense that he can't help but be drawn to it. In fact, because he's been on the journey before himself with temptation and pain, in his love, he cannot be held back when he sees us there.

I think this just absolutely blows out of the water, the idea that only when life is going well, God is there with me or his favour is on me. Ever heard anyone say that before?

No. In fact, when you are in a mess, Jesus is drawn to help you. He knows what it's like to be thirsty, to be hungry, to be homeless, rejected, misunderstood, embarrassed, shamed, tortured and ultimately killed.

So, we can run to Jesus because he is gentle and he can sympathise with our weakness. Jesus knows we get tunnel vision. We get tunnel vision big time when life's a mess.

[13:53] He gets it. We can start to question and doubt that what he says is true and who he is is good. Jesus was just like us except instead of being sinfully weak, he was sinlessly weak.

Hebrews 5 verse 2 says these words, he can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward since he himself is beset with weakness. Now, I really like Dan Ortland's take on this.

A few of you might have read the book Gentle and Lowly but this is what he says. The point is that Jesus deals gently and only gently with all sinners who come to him irrespective of their particular offence and just how heinous it is.

What elicits tenderness from Jesus is not the severity of the sin but whether the sinner comes to him. The key is coming and drawing near to him and the language of drawing near is reminiscent of the worship of Old Testament Israel where people would draw near to God.

at the tabernacle or the temple and the priests that had even more intimate access. They drew near to the altar. The high priest having the greatest access of all drawing near to the ark, the holy place, the holy of holies, symbolically God's throne.

[15:12] So the wonder of 4 verse 16 is that we can all approach. That we can all approach all the way and we can do so with confidence and that the throne we approach is not a throne of judgment and condemnation but one of grace and mercy with Jesus as the high priest.

On the other hand, if we don't come to Jesus because we don't know Jesus, just like if the priest didn't bring the sacrifice for the people, we have a very different result.

Jesus' lamb-like tenderness cannot be extended to us. Instead, we would only know the fierceness of a lion-like judgment. A few years ago, I spent some time working at the Mater Hospital in the drug and alcohol team and a rare opportunity came up for me to sit in on a two-week program to help people recover from drug and alcohol addiction.

And in this two-week program, people recovering from addiction, they watched videos, they listened to speakers and generally shared ideas how they could be motivated towards long-lasting change. They'd seen the wreck and ruin that drugs and alcohol had brought to their lives, an addiction to drugs and alcohol. One of those days, there was an unforgettable speaker who introduced himself and he told the group this.

[16:38] He said, I'm a recovering alcoholic. I haven't touched a drop of alcohol in over two decades. When he said that, it was like you could hear a pin drop in the room.

Everyone was listening. He went on to say, I'm still a recovering alcoholic because I know if I go back to it, it will own me. And he made this observation. He made this observation.

He realised, and he said, he told us about this constant anchor for a few people like him that had been addicted but had now stopped. he told us it was the relationship with Jesus that made all the difference.

That's what Jesus is like in his tenderness. Even those battling the worst addictions and hidden scars can look to him for all they need. Isn't that the kind of gentleness we all look for in a relationship?

Someone who can see all our flaws yet love us anyway? It's one of the deepest longings we all have to be fully known with all our failures and mistakes and yet fully loved.

[17:42] How could we not feel drawn to that kind of love? What's so extraordinary about this passage is it's not just in Jesus' humanity he reaches us in this way.

In Hebrews 5 verse 5 we hear these words. So also Christ did not say I'll start again. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest but was appointed by him who said to him you are my son today I have forgotten you.

So he says also in another place you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. So again we hear what totally set Jesus apart as unique to any other priest before him.

This kind of love and gentleness began in the halls of heaven. In 5 verse 5 we hear Jesus is appointed by God the Father. Jesus was hand selected by the Father to become human like us and in total humility Jesus went before the cross knowing the will of the Father that special selection would mean he would be begotten for us.

What does begotten actually mean? Well the word begotten is actually first mentioned as a promise in Psalm 2 verse 7 so you can look there if you like but the answer for what it means actually comes from Acts 13 verse 32 to 34 and it's where Paul is speaking to fellow believers and he speaks to the promise being fulfilled that Jesus would be raised to life or resurrected for us so forgiveness of sins could be preached to us.

[19:22] So we can run to Jesus because he was raised to life and appointed by God for that very purpose for us and his ultimate tenderness and mercy came to us only because he was appointed to be forgotten for us.

At the ultimate cost to Jesus with his life he set in motion a change that forever put sin to the sword that forever made Jesus the great high priest.

Hebrews 1 verse 3 says after the purification of sins he sat down at the right hand of majesty on high. This is the throne of grace in verse 16 the very one we can now approach boldly because of God's appointment for Jesus to give us a grace and tenderness we never deserved.

Now there's more to be said about the role of Melchizedek and I'm glad Lockheed touched on it in the kids talk today Jesus is compared to his lineage and it's an important area but we're not going

there today because David will be talking to that in more depth in a couple of weeks. It pops up again in Hebrews a couple of times and much more in a couple of weeks. Well we started talking today about how it's easy for our intuition to tell us that when things get difficult in life we're more alone than ever.

[20 : 48] The good news we hear in God's word is there is a different story when you come to Jesus. And look I think modern psychology modern psychology points out helpfully that we can have a tendency to fight, flight or freeze when we get overwhelmed.

You'd notice that you know like if you were shocked and stood next to a snake you're either going to want to kill it, run away or you'll be frozen in the moment. That's what happens when you get overwhelmed.

It's an entirely typical human instinct when trouble comes for our brain to like kick into survival mode. The alarm switches, we go into survival mode. But what I love about Hebrews, what I love about this section of scripture is Jesus shows us an entirely different picture, an entirely different way of reacting to trouble.

He shows us through his own life how he ran to the father even when it's life or death. Verse 7 to 9 says this, please follow with me in your Bibles, in the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death.

And he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. Hear the pain in these words with loud cries and tears, with loud cries and tears.

[22 : 21] As Jesus prepared in the garden of Gethsemane for death, he prayed. Can you imagine the temptation for Jesus to demand a different result? He could have called a legion of angels to his rescue, but he didn't.

With meekness and gentleness, Jesus stood before the father. In total humility, he went before us. And he did that so we no longer need to fix our eyes on our sin anymore, but on him.

We've talked about temptation in Hebrews today. Isn't it interesting in the garden of Gethsemane that Jesus told his disciples not just once but twice to pray. Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

Even when the disciples did not listen to Jesus and kept sleeping on the very cusp of Jesus being betrayed, he offered mercy to the disciples. He said he understood the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.

How much more will he do for us now that he's passed into the heavens on the throne of grace and calls us to draw near to him? There is something else to notice at Gethsemane.

[23 : 32] Jesus had help from the father and he had companionship from the disciples, even though they did a pretty dodgy job, right? Just when he needed them the most, but he still had their companionship. So Jesus drew near vertically and horizontally.

I think this is a good application point. I think we should stop and ask, are we doing the same or are we battling things alone, trying to solve things ourselves? Sometimes during difficulties we're tempted to throw in the lot and look somewhere else than Jesus.

So a word of encouragement, if you find yourself in the storm, don't let your situation, your location, your relationships, tunnel vision you into thinking you're alone and God hasn't showed up.

The devil wants us to question the presence, the goodness, the faithfulness and the grace of God. Howard Hendricks, he was a professor and a preacher yesteryear, last century.

He makes the observation, I think it's a really good observation. Every believer, he says, needs three types of relationships. We need a pool who can mentor and encourage, a pool who can mentor and challenge us.

[24 : 45] We need a Barnabas who can come alongside and encourage us. And we need a Timothy, someone we can pour our life into. So say that again, we need a pool who can mentor and challenge us.

We need a Barnabas who can come alongside and encourage us. And we need a Timothy, someone we can pour our life into. I like this illustration because when we run to Jesus and grasp his gentleness, it can't help but change in how we think and behave and flow through what we do. And I think it's only natural for that to flow through to others when we experience and know Jesus gentleness to us. Drawing near and understanding Jesus mercy and gentleness, it's a community project.

So by extension as believers, we need mentoring and challenging by others. We need those next to us who can come alongside and encourage us. And we need others we can mentor and grow, who we can share Jesus' gentleness with.

So if these are not marks you find in your life as a believer today, I want you to encourage not just to consider finding these relationships, but make it your goal.

[25 : 58] Make it your goal to work on that today. And above all, keep your eyes on his tenderness and run to him. Let's pray together.

Father God, we thank you for the confidence we can have to draw near to you, knowing that you love helping us no matter what mess or trouble we find ourselves in.

We stand in awe that you are the great high priest, totally sinless, that resisted all temptation so we might have direct access to knowing your gentleness and mercy today.

We ask you might help us find believers that can mentor, encourage, and we can grow in understanding these wonderful truths together. In Jesus' name, Amen.