

Our Great High Priest

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Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 0 0] it'd be great if you could turn in your bibles to hebrews chapter 4 if you've closed them and there's also an outline in the newsletter that you might find helpful why don't you just pray for us before we begin our father we do thank you for your word and father we prayed as annette prayed before that you would give us ears to hear it but also minds to understand it and hearts that would be encouraged by it for we ask it in jesus name amen well from time to time there are certain kinds of people we need in life are they not doctors we need doctors sadly because we get sick so we need doctors from time to time or teachers for our children and teenagers whether at school or university we need teachers we need even garbage collectors to empty the bins don't we we need mechanics accountants lawyers all these sorts of people we need from time to time but what about a high priest if you ask someone in the street today whether they thought they needed a high priest i i would imagine you get that answer like a what huh no in fact i went looking in the yellow pages for a high priest you can still look on the yellow pages i found a high pressure cleaning service high prestige floor sanding and high profile hair studio i don't know not sure what that last one meant a high profile hair studio i wonder whether they gave you high profile haircuts like this next slide you know up high i wasn't sure but the point is there was no listing for a high priest and so it seems that people think they don't need one today but here's the thing we actually do need a high priest we all need a high priest you see you can go to the next title slide um so jeh uh we're all going to die and we're all going to have to give an account to god that's where we left it at our last verse from last week so if you got your bibles open there have a look at the last verse from last week verse 13 of chapter 4 it's the top left hand corner of page 1207 there do you see their top left hand corner verse 13 says 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 an account you see we're all going to appear before god aren't we and we're all going to have to give an account for how we live and so when that happens who's going to speak for us i mean that's what a high priest does a high priest is someone who stands before god to represent people and speak on their behalf and so they are a little bit like a lawyer or an advocate as we heard from one john two who might approach the judge and represent you before the judge to argue your case for you and when it comes to god we need this because as i said we've all sinned against god we've all forgotten to give god thanks from time to time we've all not given god the honor that is due to him as god and when we die we will all appear before god the judge and we're going to be held accountable for how we've lived that life now of course we could try and appear before god and represent ourselves as people sometimes do in court don't they they say no i don't want a lawyer i'll represent myself yet it rarely if ever goes well in fact judges even in human courts will say no no i encourage you to get a lawyer now if it rarely goes well in a human court how do you think it will go in a heavenly court where everything in your life is laid bare verse 13 uncovered before god how do you think we'll go at representing ourselves no no we need a high priest to speak for us and the

great news of verse 14 is that we have such a high priest we have jesus as our great high priest so point one verse 14 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 he says here the writer announces that we have not just a high priest did you notice but a great high priest who is none other than jesus the son of god but what is it that makes jesus such a great high priest well i want to suggest two reasons the first reason is because he's gone into heaven itself into the heavenly courtroom to represent us directly before god so on the next slide is a picture of the tabernacle which was like the temple only a tent version that they could pack up and move around with them and you might be able to just make out the priest in the in the middle there but on the next slide is a closer look at the high priest and each part of his clothing had significance which we can't go into now but then on the

next slide is a diagram of that tabernacle and as you can see there there was a curtain that separated the most holy place where god dwelt from everything else and the high priest could only go into that most holy place once a year to represent people and when lawyers know that their client is guilty and they can't get their client off they often offer a plea bargain don't they and the high priest would enter that most holy place before god once a year with a kind of plea bargain it would be the blood of sacrifices to pay for sins so that people could go free now there were lots of weekly sacrifices as well but the big one was on the day of atonement where the priest would offer this plea bargain into that most holy place so that the people could go free but you see jesus is greater than those high priests because he has entered not an earthly temple or tabernacle but heaven itself verse 14 and he stands directly before god not just once a year but continually what's more he's offered his own blood as a plea bargain for our sin his blood shed once for all back at the cross continues to speak for us and to bring us forgiveness now the writer will have much more to say about that particular part later on but for now it's enough to notice that jesus is the great high priest firstly because he stands in heaven itself to speak on our behalf and so the writer says in verse 14 so let us hold firmly to the faith we profess that's what he's been saying last week hold firmly to this faith to this jesus because it is only this christ who is our great high priest but holding firmly to the christian faith is sometimes hard isn't it now these readers were being persecuted for being christians and so they were tempted to let go of christ instead of holding firm to christ and for us it can be different sorts of reasons can't we could suffer ourselves which makes us doubt god's goodness we can see suffering in other people or in the world which would cause us to doubt and perhaps want to let go uh it could be unanswered prayer or rather prayer that is answered but not with the answer that we want that might cause us to you know doubt god and be tempted to let go of christ it is sometimes hard to persevere in following god and so the second thing that makes jesus such a great high priest is that he gets it that is he understands how hard it can be to persevere do you see verse 15 he says for we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses but we have one who's been tempted in every way just as we are yet he did not sin you see jesus gets how hard it can be to follow god he knows what it's like to be human to struggle with temptation and to face our weaknesses in other words he knows what it's like to be you me and there's no one who can encourage you more than someone who gets it who who's walked in your shoes who's experienced what you've experienced i remember when our first child was born um he had reflux and if you know anything about children and reflux you know that that means screaming and lots of it and so our first child was a screamer and around the same time as our first child was born we had some friends who also had their first child and she did not scream in fact she did not cry her father did not hear her cry once for the first three months of her life true story and i remember seeing them uh before he ever heard her cry and we were all blurry died because we'd been kept up all night with our screamer and we talked about how hard this parenting thing was and uh he said to me what do you mean i don't understand this thing where parents say parenting's hard work i reckon you just got to change how you parent it was some time before i spoke to him again he can't encourage you if you don't if they don't get it and at the same time we had some other friends who did have a child with reflux like ours and so michelle would speak to her and they would encourage each other they would exchange war stories so to speak and michelle was encouraged to keep going helped to persevere you see there's no one as encouraging as someone who gets it who who's walked in our shoes and what makes jesus such a great high priest is that he has done that he understands how life can be so hard this side of heaven and in particular he understands how hard it can be to follow god he was tempted to forsake god just as the readers are tempted to forsake him in fact it says he was tempted in every way verse 15 and not every specific temptation of course but every uh category of temptation if you like so for example he didn't face the specific temptation of breaking the speed limit um even though the camels might have gone that fast i don't know um but he was tempted to disobey the authorities every category of sin you see yet he never gave in to these temptations the point is he knows how hard it is to follow god which means more than anything anyone else he really does get it he can really sympathize empathize with us he really is a great high priest who not only speaks for us but stands with us and this ought to not encourage us to hold firmly to the faith but also give us confidence to approach god knowing that he will help us do you see verse 16 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 now we need to realize here that god is as though god is a grumpy old judge who's been sitting on the bench too long and jesus has to twist his arm to help us no no no god wants to

forgive us he gave his son in the first place after all but having jesus as our priest who understands gives us confidence that we're not alone as we approach god in prayer yet again to ask for mercy or forgiveness yet again to ask for help and we need not feel shy or feel pathetic because we're asking yet again because jesus gets it he understands but our confidence is not just in knowing it's okay to approach god we also have confidence that we will receive from god mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need

this help of course might come in the form of a fellow christian who calls you during the week or drops around a meal for you it might be through a word of scripture you read or hear it might be through a reminder that god puts in your mind to help you remember something you've learned that encourages you whatever form it comes in this help will be at just the right time in verse 16 where it says that we'll find grace to help us in our time of need it literally says to give us timely help in other words help that comes just at the right time but according to the way god sees it not how we see it let me see if i explain at the moment we're struggling to get our third child in particular to clean her room whenever we ask her to clean her room she walks through the door sees the mess then collapses on the floor crying saying can you please help me it's too messy we then say who made the mess but anyway now we deliberately don't help her straight away i mean we do help her eventually but not straight away why well if we did how would that help her to learn to do it for herself how would that help her to grow and mature you see no we wait and we help her at the right time so that she might grow and mature and the promise here of help is genuine it is real it will come but it's according to god's timing it's at the right time as he sees it not according to the way we see it and it's so that we might grow and mature and persevere but the point is here that jesus is our great high priest firstly because he has gone into heaven itself to speak for us before god and secondly because he gets it he can sympathize with us and so we're not alone he understands what it's like to be you and to be me and that gives us confidence to keep coming back to god for forgiveness and help and confidence knowing that he will give it that we might cling to christ christ to the very end and now all this is uh great news but there is a problem especially for our readers you see our readers were jews and they knew that to be a high priest you had to have certain qualifications which brings us to point two this point will be very brief and now there are several qualifications to be a high priest on the next slide i've listed them there for you at first you had to be one of the people in order to represent the people second you had to offer sacrifices for the sins of people at third you had to know what it's like to be one of the people so you could deal gently or sympathize with them and fourth you had to be called by god now there's one other qualification which we'll come back to later in chapter seven but for now see if you can recognize these four qualifications as i read chapter five verses one to four he says now every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to god to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins he is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray since he himself is subject to weakness this is why he has to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as the sins of the people and no one takes this honor on himself but he receives it when called by god just as aaron was did you see those four qualifications there of every old testament high priest and so the question becomes then well if jesus is our great high priest does he meet those qualifications because if he doesn't then he cannot be a high priest let alone our great high priest and so the writer now begins to show us how jesus has fulfilled those qualifications at point three verse five he says in the same way christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest but god said to him you are my son today i've become your father and he says in another place you are a priest forever in the order of melchizedek here the writer starts with the fourth qualification being called by god and he says jesus was called by god he was called by god through the old testament scriptures and to prove it he quotes those old testament scriptures to us in verse six the first quote is from psalm two and the second quote from psalm 110 which was our first reading and now on the next slide both psalms about the king and the messiah the christ they all mean the same thing and so when we say jesus christ we're really saying jesus the king and from the very first sentence the writer has been saying that jesus is this exalted son and so if you click next here we are jesus the son at the bottom of the screen now psalm 2 says that the king would also be called the son the son of god so if you click next uh jesus the son well he's the son of god and that happens to be the king according to psalm 2 and so that means jesus is this promised king so you click next now if jesus is the promised king of psalm 2 and psalm 110 is also about the king then both psalms must be talking about jesus so if you click next this is his logic and what's more psalm 110 says that the king will also be the priest so hit next and if jesus is the king of psalm 110

that means next jesus is the priest that's his logic that's how he uses these two psalms to prove that jesus has been called by god to be a priest now if you don't follow that that's okay the point is just as aaron was called by god so jesus is called by god by this psalm to be a priest and so he meets that qualification and what about the other qualifications we'll have a look at verse 7 and 8 during the days of jesus's life on earth he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death and he was heard because of his reverent submission some though he was he learned obedience from what he suffered now here in verse 7 where it says days of his life it is literally days of his flesh which is important because it reminds us that jesus really was human he really is one of the people and so he can represent the people tick there's another qualification what's more as a human jesus really did walk in our shoes like us he really did experience suffering and temptation and verse 7 refers to events in jesus's life where he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears and that ought to remind us of events in his life like the garden of gethsemane do you remember on the next slide where where jesus said to his disciples my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death stay here keep watch and going further he said to his father my father if it is possible may this cup be taken from me this cup of your judgment yet not as i will but as you will luke at the bottom of the slide puts it like this when he jesus prays again and being the anguish he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground see jesus knew he was about to bear god's judgment for our sin and it overwhelmed him it scared him and no doubt it tempted him to forsake his father's will and yet he resisted that temptation he said not as i will father but as you will what's more verse 7 where it talks about loud cries

[20 : 18] well can you remember where he cried out loudly next slide on the cross he cried out with a loud voice my god my god why have you forsaken me these are the events the writer is talking about here in verse 7 this is how jesus went through suffering for us and the point is that jesus well and truly knew both sufferings and temptation he knows it better than we do and so jesus really can sympathize with us he can deal gently with us as the whole old testament high priest was to deal gently and so he meets yet another qualification now because uh he was obedient to his father's will even to death on a cross then god heard his prayer and saved him out of death by raising him to life and so jesus became the perfect source of salvation uh so verse uh pick it up at verse 8 again son though he was he learned obedience from what he suffered and once made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation and so he was designated by god to be a high priest in order of melchizedek jesus learned obedience not in the sense that children have to become obedient but in the sense he learned what it meant for him to be obedient he experienced what his obedience meant it meant dying on a cross for our sin and in so doing he became the perfect source of our salvation he offered himself as a sacrifice just as the old testament priests were to offer sacrifices for sin and so he fulfills yet another qualification and so here's the one on the next slide then he fulfills all those qualifications doesn't he he is one of the people he can represent us he offers himself as a sacrifice for sin to save us he knows temptation and suffering more than we do so he can sympathize with us and he is called by god he meets all those qualifications and so the writer concludes in verse 10 by saying that jesus truly is high priest in the order of melchizedek now the writer will come back to mel uh in um not mel bartholomeus but mel this melchizedek here in chapter 7 but the point here is that jesus really does stand for us and with us he really is our great high priest to help us persevere to the end so what does all this mean for us well first question we need to ask ourselves is is jesus our high priest because we need one who will represent us who will speak for us before the throne of god and so do you trust in jesus to help you on that day is he your high priest do you believe in him for if we do then he will represent us and speak for us in the heavenly courtroom his blood once offered at the cross will be a sufficient plea bargain for our sins but if we don't believe then he won't represent us instead we'll have to represent ourselves before god and i can guarantee you that will not go well but for us who do believe in jesus then we are to remember that he he is really our high priest and in today's passage that particularly means we're not alone in our christian walk i hope you've seen that he jesus is with us and he understands us he he gets how hard life can be which is encouraging and what's more it gives us great confidence to come to god yet again for mercy and help so that we may hold firmly to christ and persevere to the very end let me finish with a true story of a man i know called dave um he lost his girl his daughter when she was young and at the funeral he confessed that um it almost drove him to give up on god and walk away from jesus he said it he'd stopped reading his bible he stopped praying because the hurt was so great and the anger at god so fierce

i like the readers of hebrews he was tempted to forsake jesus altogether but then he said this he said but then i realized that jesus understands my suffering and my suffering is but a glimpse of his which he endured for me in other words he knew jesus understood how he felt and that encouraged him to keep coming to god in prayer to find forgiveness and grace to help help to hold on to christ to the very end so please do remember jesus is your great high priest remember that he gets it he knows what it's like to be you and so let him encourage you to keep coming to god in prayer as i know many of you do that we might all stick with the lord jesus to the very end in the words of our next hymn what a friend we have in jesus all our sins and griefs to bear what a privilege to carry everything to god in prayer let's do that now let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for the lord jesus we thank you that he truly is our great high priest and so with that truth firmly implanted in our minds help us to be encouraged by it and to continue living for the lord jesus christ for we ask it in his name amen