

Hebrews 2:5-13 “The Way Up Is Down”

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.! Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

I'm loving getting to study Hebrews together. The book of Hebrews is a sermon, really a sermon written in the first century to churches struggling with following Jesus in a world that's opposed to Him. Many of them were starting to feel small, insignificant, insignificant, unsuccessful. Maybe we can relate.

He started just in the first couple of chapters by telling them of the greatness of Jesus, right? Even greater than all the angels. So don't drift from Jesus. And he says that because this morning God wants to look at all of us feeling insignificant and discouraged right in the face and say, look at God's glorious plan for you and Jesus. That's what he wants you to see.

Now I want to give you a warning before we read. This passage could change the way that you view your entire existence, your whole life. It may change the way you see Jesus. In fact, we should hope it does since it's God's word to us so that we will see rightly and truly.

Let me read it first and then we'll ask for God's help. Hebrews chapter 2, beginning at verse 5. Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come of which we are speaking.

[1 : 57] It has been testified somewhere, what is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little while lower than the angels. You have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet. Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death so that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting that he for whom and by whom all things exist in bringing many sons to glory should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, I will tell of your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise.

And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, behold, I and the children God has given me. Thus far, God's holy word. Let's pray together.

Father, we are really thankful for your word. I'm just aware that as I preach, I'm preaching a book that I did not write.

[3 : 42] With power and ability that I don't purchase or earn to people that I don't save and can't save.

We need you, Father. We need you to speak. It's your word that needs to penetrate our hearts. So by your spirit, would you help us? We ask that you do that especially now in Jesus' name. Amen.

There's a reason that you want people to notice or remember you. There's a reason you get bored or frustrated when you wake up and don't feel you have a purpose for the day.

There's a reason that you long to make a difference in the world, to do something that really matters. God made you for glory.

That's the reason. Notice, it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come.

[4 : 54] So who was it? Who was it, we want to ask? He doesn't give us a single immediate answer because he's going to give us two. We'll get there. But first, he goes back to Psalm 8.

That's the psalm that says, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name and all the earth. You've set your glory above the heavens and so forth. And he says, You made humanity, mankind, for a

little while lower than angels.

Crowned with glory and honor, putting everything under his feet. That's how you created it, God. The psalmist is marveling at this glorious divine plan.

There's echoes of Genesis 1, right? Man and woman created in God's image as vice regents to exercise dominion over God's good creation.

To name the animals, right? To tend the garden, to harvest the fruit of all the trees. Dominion over all sorts of animals and all sorts of environments and with all sorts of plants.

[6 : 05] There's nothing outside of his control. That's the point. Do you realize that? That this world made to shine the goodness of the creator king is to be watched over by you and me to the end that it gleams with glory.

That's what God's doing. That's the way he designed it. Adam and Eve, you and I are to fill every corner of the globe with the most glorious light.

You know what it is? It's the reflection of the very image of God. That's what you're here to do. To reflect his image. The image of the king who rules righteously and justly and mercifully.

Who feeds every animal. Who causes the sun to rise and the rains to fall and the just and the unjust. In God's creation, he crowned you.

That's the plan. Sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. Kings and queens in God's world. To no one and nothing else did God give that role.

[7 : 21] Not the angels. Not lions. Not stars. Not puppies. No. We rule.

We live in relationship. This is the design. So close to this glorious creator. We know him so personally and so intimately that we shine his glory over and into every place that he sends us to rule on his behalf.

Wow. That's a lot of glory. Except that something happened to our glory.

Keep reading. Here he explains what you may feel when I talk that way. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

Uh-oh. Not the way it's supposed to be. Thorns and thistles and painful childbirth.

[8 : 31] They start pushing back against the vice regents. The ones who themselves stopped submitting to their king who in our rebellion trashed the world that we were supposed to tend.

I want to open this up for us a bit and see if you can feel it. What you live every day. See, it's not merely that we haven't mastered the plants and the animals, the storms and the winds, the physical creation.

That's true. But in addition, we war with one another, don't we? We abuse power. We neglect people.

Many of us are trapped in some aspect of that sin that messed everything up in the first place.

Some deep selfishness or lust or apathy that's just unbecoming of a king or queen of creation.

And it makes us feel powerless and hopeless oftentimes. It's enough to make one feel pretty small. Pretty insignificant some days, isn't it?

[9 : 46] We thought we were headed upward to glory. But day to day, our path seems to trend downward. Doesn't it?

I want you to imagine listening to this story of this first century church this sermon is written to. See if you recognize anything for the 21st century church.

They might say something like, you know, we thought we were going to change the world and move from success to success. Well, to be honest, we don't yet have everything under control the way God designed.

In fact, some of our leaders we most look to have been killed for their outspoken faith. Others have abandoned the faith themselves or failed to finish well, shipwrecked in immorality or greed.

Some of our young people have found the cost too high. The church too unreliable. They've moved on.

[10 : 55] Our neighbors seem to want us just to keep caring for the poor but stop talking about Jesus. We came together early on. We were so excited about our glorious Savior.

But all of us feel like we've drifted from Him at times. We read the beginning of this letter and we think, oh no, how could we possibly have drifted already? How embarrassing it is.

To be honest, we're not feeling much of the glory. Any of that sound familiar? I come to church wanting to taste glory and the coffee's not my favorite.

The pastor's mic doesn't work sometimes. We're behind in the budget. I was at that meeting last week. More than that, we're not having the impact in our community that we long for. Even our own marriages and families are longing for help. We're not in power politically. Not in vogue culturally.

[12:02] Not in control personally. I mean, we indulge our apathy and comfort more than we share the good news with the world. We indulge our lusts and our greed more than we sacrifice for our spouses or our neighbors.

We're not feeling much of the glory. We're pretty sure we're moving in the wrong direction, aren't we? Downward in sin and suffering and persecution.

What an insignificant bunch we must be. Anybody ready to give up? I wonder if it's worth it. If that's all you see, you probably would be ready to give up.

But the writer, the preacher, wants to make sure that we see someone else too. So you can, as a person or a church, be in a place where you feel, maybe even for two decades, in Lyon, France. It's like, God, what are you doing? I thought you were going to do something great here and it's not working on my timetable. You feel that in Huntsville, Alabama when things don't go in your family or your church the way they want.

[13:21] And God says, don't just see those things. He wants us to see someone else. Who's the one that we need to see? Kids, what do you think? When the writer of Hebrews is saying, who do we need to see?

Who do we need to fix our eyes on? Who is it that we need not to drift away from? We need to listen to and see who? Kids? Jesus.

See, you got it. They didn't even know the answer. Y'all are very good. Jesus. All caps. Jesus.

That's who we want you to see.

I love this verse. Watch how this develops. We don't yet see everything in subjection to him, meaning mankind, right?

That is an understatement. We're not in control of everything. We don't have it all figured out. We don't yet see everything in subjection to him, but we see Jesus.

[14:21] We see him for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus. Now, let me explain what he's doing here.

Not everyone agrees with me on this, but I'm pretty confident that what the writer does here is show us Jesus as the man par excellence.

He's the one. The writer's pointing us back to Psalm 8, and he's saying, look, while this hasn't fully happened yet for Adam or Eve or you, look how Jesus fulfills this because you're connected to him. Back to union with Christ in just a minute. Verse 9 says, we see him, but it's not the same pronoun him that's being used in verses 6 through 8.

There's a change. We see him, someone different. And I think what he says is, so now that we're talking about Jesus, look back to Psalm 8 with me.

[15:30] He's going to repeat some of the phrases. He, Jesus, in his incarnation was made for a little while lower than the angels, right? But he is now, what?

Crowned with glory and honor. Ah, there's the glory that we've been looking for. It's Jesus. He's the one who has it. He is the man, the one with the glory.

But importantly, how did he get there? How is it that Jesus is the one with the glory? What's the pathway to glory? It's the suffering of death.

Do you mean it's possible that those of us going downward, hurting, seeming insignificant, are actually on the pathway to glory? We're not lost in the dark forest somewhere?

Nah, no. That doesn't feel like glory. What? Keep reading. So that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone.

[16:39] Oh, wait. Maybe there could be. This glorious king, the one crowned with glory, tasted death? Yeah. He suffered and died.

He sacrificed and at the same time substituted, tasted death for me? That doesn't sound very glorious, tasting death. The preacher says, I know.

I know it doesn't sound like that, but listen, don't give up on this pathway. It was actually fitting. It's important that you understand this, Hebrew church.

Southwood church. Don't miss this. It was fitting. A suffering savior, a dying king is not something to be embarrassed about.

It was fitting, appropriate. It was right that God, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation, that's Jesus, perfect through suffering.

[17 : 46] Now, that doesn't mean that Jesus was imperfect morally. The word there implies completion, perfection of this role as savior.

Complete through what? What did Jesus not have yet? Through suffering. He had to take on flesh and suffer and die.

More on that next week. He's going to go into more detail. But there's this word founder there that's at the crux of what God's people need to see then and now when we see Jesus, the founder of our salvation.

It's a hard word to translate with a single English word. I'll say trailblazing champion. The word is archegos, the one who goes first, who makes it possible for others to follow in his wake.

The pioneer, the captain of our salvation. The point is that Jesus has blazed the trail, okay? He's trod the path to glory so that others can follow that way with him.

[19 : 02] I really want to help you understand what this means. I want to give you a couple pictures because each of them reflects some aspect of what God wants us to see of Jesus here.

But we see Jesus, our archegos, our champion. It's football season, so a quick video. Pay attention in this video, not just to the guy carrying the ball.

He's returning a kick. I especially want you to watch the lead blocker right in front of him. Watch this video. Got them both.

Close up. Boom. All the way to the end zone. To glory, right? But only because the lead blocker paves the way, knocks down the enemy.

That's Jesus, the trailblazing champion. That's what it's like. Pastor Derek told me this week that we're talking about this word. He said, this word makes me think of when I would mow the grass behind my dad.

[20 : 18] That's not Pastor Derek. But this is the same idea. The dad having to push the mower to blaze a trail through tall, thick grass, perhaps all that suffering, so that his son with the toy plastic mower can come right in behind him and maybe not cut a lot of grass possibly, but enjoy the glory of a freshly mowed lawn with his dad.

It's also MLK weekend, so I thought of Rosa Parks, who 70 years ago, unbeknownst to her, she didn't set out to do this, and she became the mother of the civil rights movement when she wouldn't get out of her seat on the bus in Montgomery, right?

She was arrested. She was maligned by many. She suffered so that many others could eventually sit on the bus and in many other places without enduring the suffering that she did as the pioneer, right?

The champion. That's what Jesus has done for us. You mean to tell me, Pastor, that this dark path of suffering and shame and seeming insignificance that I'm on is the path Jesus walked on his way to glory?

You mean I'm not on the wrong path? That's right. If you're a discouraged brother or sister today, if walking with Jesus hasn't seemed like everything you thought it was going to be and life hasn't just gotten simpler and easier, yet don't give up.

[22 : 14] Don't turn back. Don't choose comfort or power and just give up on the path that you're walking. In fact, Jesus has tasted death so that we won't have to forever.

He's blazed a trail to glory, to salvation, that we walk with him, behind him. Yes, we see Jesus.

We have hope of glory. Keep walking with him. It's the right path. He's cleared it of your worst enemies. Stay on that path with him. Verse 11 may be the most important verse for you to hear today if you battle shame and weakness and smallness.

Listen to this. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin, one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers.

Jesus is the Holy One, the beginning of that verse, the one who does the sanctifying, who sets the others apart as they're united to him by faith. And the ones who are sanctified, that's us.

[23 : 37] The ones still in process, the ones struggling behind, thankful that our strong champion is out in front. But what he's getting at is, how does he feel about us?

You know, as he with his big, strong, loud lawnmower looks back over his shoulder and peers back at us, is he ashamed? Is he embarrassed at how little we're accomplishing?

At how insignificant our plastic mower contributions are? Is that how he feels? Oh, he knows compared to his, it's nothing. No.

In fact, he says, look, dear ones, we have the same father. We're brothers and sisters. You're my brother, Jesus says.

You're my sister, Jesus says. I'm proud of you. And I know some of your hearts say when you hear that, he doesn't really mean it. Or he has to say that because he's God and all that love and stuff in the Bible, he just has to say it.

[24 : 52] Or he says it, but he only means that about the good Christians who never doubt or divorce or drink. No.

No, don't diminish his cross. He died to make you a brother or sister of his. He won't have you be anything less.

He refuses. Most of us have some family members that we're maybe a little bit ashamed of, not really wanting to associate with or promote our connection to, advertise around as though it's going to get us ahead.

Jesus says he proudly stands by you in a culture where family means everything. And he says, that's my boy. She's my sister.

It's like the puny freshman on the football team who's just being mercilessly mocked and beaten up on by the older players until the star senior linebacker walks across the field.

[26 : 02] And though it might cost him, puts his arm around you and says, that's my brother. It's like the sixth grade girl who doesn't really know how to dress or act in middle school.

And the older kids are just picking on her terribly and she just wants to go home until the it, eighth grade girl, leader of the cool crowd who would never usually be seen with anyone else, walks across the cafeteria and puts her arm around you and says, that's my sister.

Jesus knows. He understands your path doesn't look pretty right now. He's walked it. Without sin, He knows the struggle and He's making you holy because He's made you His.

Okay? You're coming to glory because you're coming with Him. Finally, as we're seeing Jesus, the preacher puts three Old Testament quotations in Jesus' mouth to affirm this amazing reality that He's not ashamed of His brothers and sisters.

The latter two are from Isaiah 8. In that context, they highlight trusting God in the dark times even when His face is turned away from you. It's what those two are about.

[27 : 35] They're just really short. That these are people who are struggling, but Jesus claims them in His family. The first one is from Psalm 22.

That one right there. That's a psalm that Jesus famously takes on His lips on the cross when He cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Right?

Here, the part referenced is the suffering Messiah praising God in the congregation of God's people.

Like, right there in the pews. He speaks of God's name to His brothers. This is, I don't know if you can quite grasp this, but it's like you turn during the meet and greet time and Jesus is there shaking your hand welcoming you.

He's been worshiping with you. That Jesus, the one worthy of all worship Himself, stands with us, raises His hands in praise, opens His heart in dependence upon His heavenly Father.

[28 : 48] I mean, think about that the next time you're preparing to come to worship, would you? You think about what that would do to your heart? Jesus, your older brother who went to the cross, joins you in singing praise to Yahweh.

He prays with you our Father in heaven. His voice is the loudest one in the room. He listens eagerly to the Word of God. Wow! That, that's what it's saying.

See, He's the true man. Now crowned with glory because though, though being king, He sacrificed His life to blaze a trail for us into relationship with God, true holiness, genuine worship.

We men and women now get to follow Him. But where? What will that look like? What's it gonna look like if we're not gonna stay small and insignificant, hopeless, despairing?

I want you to track with Jesus' path, right? Jesus' path started where? Highest glory possible. The radiance of the glory of God.

[30 : 07] Downward, to be coming for a little while, lower than the angels. Actually humbled to the point of death on a cross so that God could exalt Him to the highest place now crowned with glory and honor ruling over everything.

You got Jesus' path? Now what was God doing when He sent His Son down that path and then brought Him home to glory? Look at verse 10. In bringing His Son to glory.
Nope. In bringing many sons to glory. glory. In bringing many sons to glory, God's original plan is gonna come to fruition.

Glory is not merely God's original plan for mankind that He's now scrapped because we're such failures. No. It's God's future for mankind.

Glory. That's what's happening when you walk this path of insignificance. It's actually the pathway to glory. Remember, God has subjected the world to come to two answers.

[31 : 17] Can you give them now? Two answers. The first is mankind and the second is united to Christ. Their champion king.

It's you and me in Christ. You're following the same path as Jesus from glory to suffering to glory. Jesus as the founder, the champion of your salvation has cleared the way so that this is the way, the fitting way, the right way that you reach glory just as it was for Him.

Wounds which mar the chosen one bring many sons to glory, don't they? Listen, the Bible tells you this glorious destiny from cover to cover.

we will reign forever with Jesus, judging even the angels. We've seen the beginning of this in Genesis 1, Psalm 8 referencing it.

Daniel tells us about the end of it. The kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.

[32 : 30] to the people, an everlasting kingdom. And Paul writes in 2 Timothy, if we've died with Him, we will also live with Him.

If we endure, we will also reign with Him. Isn't union with Christ amazing and beautiful?

That's why you can't read Psalm 8 as an either or. Jesus or humanity, which one is it talking about? What happens to Jesus happens to us.

Where He goes, we get to go. In this case, we reign with Him. Revelation 22 concludes, just in case you think it stops, they will need no light of lamp or sun for the Lord.

God will be their light and they will reign forever and ever. Look, your life here is only the pregame, if you will, as long as, by that, it's not to say it doesn't matter, but rather to say that you still have an eternity of glory, of ruling and reigning with Jesus, of reflecting God's glory throughout His creation.

[33 : 47] You don't, think of all the things, you're going to relate to your fellow man without selfish pride or shameful insecurity to keep you from loving Him and enjoying Him.

You're going to walk with God Himself and soak in His glory and grace with nothing to distract you from Him. You're going to tend gardens with no cursed weeds.

You're going to explore space with no time limit. You're going to roll in the grass with lions with no fear like their golden retriever puppies.

And all of that glory of heaven is ahead of you because the champion of your salvation left the glory of heaven behind Him to take the downward path to suffer and die for you.

that's that same great exchange that's in Mark Twain's story. The prince lived like a pauper so the pauper could live like a prince.

[35 : 00] That's our story brothers and sisters sons and daughters of the King of Heaven made for glory seeming, feeling, insignificant.

Jesus remade for glory. That's our story. That is great and really great for one day someday it's going to be glorious.

What do we have in the meantime? What hope for me today pastor? Come on Will you said this could change the way that I view my existence now not just give me one day someday stuff.

What are you offering today? I'm hurting I'm discouraged I'm struggling I'm barely holding on this isn't what I thought I was signing up for with Jesus life's not going the way I planned.

right now in your smallness in your failure in your seeming insignificance you have a champion who is not ashamed to call you brother or sister even while you're still in process soak that in yes lift up your head it's how he feels about you you have a substitute who tasted death for you who drained the cup of God's wrath towards your sin to its dregs so you can confidently rest finally so that you can boldly share even if it costs you of his great salvation today and maybe most importantly you have Christ in you the hope of glory listen you know what that you know what that means now that you are you are made for that and that connected to him in every high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil living hope unassailable hope glorious hope

[37 : 32] Christ in you the hope of glory let's pray Jesus what a gift that is to us especially when we don't feel glorious glorious you are and you've come to us to take you with us that you would bring us to glory many sons and daughters oh give us joy in that give us hope lift our heads personally corporately might we be a people who live like there's glory shining from us sustaining us in the darkness giving us purpose and significance moment by moment and day by day so help us we ask in Jesus name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org as