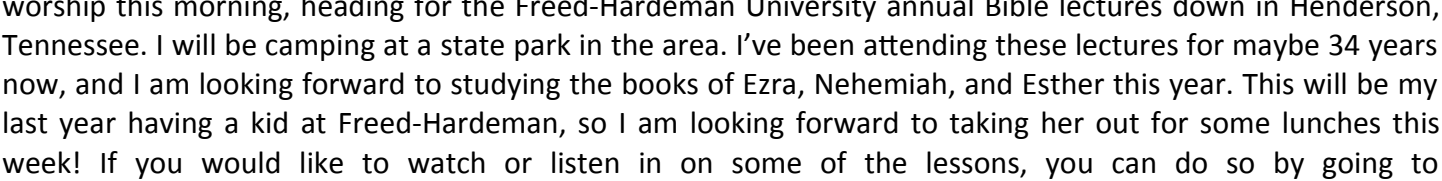


Jesus: One of Us

Hebrews: Jesus is Better • PART 4 • Hebrews 2:5-18

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Four Lakes Church of Christ
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It is good to be together this morning! If you are visiting with us today (either here in person or online), we are glad to have you with us, and we would invite you to fill out an online visitor card by using the QR code on the front of the bulletin or by going to our website at fourlakeschurch.org/visitor.

Before we get into our study of the Word, I should let you know that I am heading out of town right after worship this morning, heading for the Freed-Hardeman University annual Bible lectures down in Henderson, Tennessee. I will be camping at a state park in the area. I've been attending these lectures for maybe 34 years now, and I am looking forward to studying the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther this year. This will be my last year having a kid at Freed-Hardeman, so I am looking forward to taking her out for some lunches this week! If you would like to watch or listen in on some of the lessons, you can do so by going to www.fhu.edu/lectureship. After the lectures, I'm hoping to take a week of vacation to take the scenic route home – seeing family in the Nashville area, stopping in to visit my in-laws near Dayton, Ohio, visiting a preacher friend in Detroit, and then winter camping my way through Michigan's Upper Peninsula. I am looking forward to some pasties, I'm looking forward to doing some hiking and snowshoeing to some frozen waterfalls. And on the third Sunday in February (the day after I get back), we hope to worship down in Janesville. I preached there for seven years, and it has been a number of years since we have been able to be there in person. John Long will be preaching here that Sunday. But next week, Life Verlooy will be preaching here in Madison. Life preaches in Rice Lake, Wisconsin. I think he might have grown up in Superior, Wisconsin, he's served in the Navy, he and his family have worked with us at our summer camp for a number of years, I have preached a few times up in Rice Lake, and now he has agreed to come preach here next Sunday. Back in January 2020, Life and Stephanie bought an ice cream shop in Rice Lake, they fixed it up and got it all ready to go, and their opening day was scheduled for the exact moment that the state of Wisconsin shut down for COVID! But, they have persevered. He now works for the State of Wisconsin and commutes to Madison from Rice Lake, but I hope that you will encourage Life and his family when they are here this week.

We are here today to worship God, and part of that is preaching the good news that Jesus loves us and gave himself up for us on the cross. We respond in awe, believing the message, turning away from sin, publicly confessing that Jesus is our King, the Son of God, and by submitting to his command to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. And we do have several examples today, starting with an update from the Lord's church in Winslow, Arizona. Lori is a traveling nurse who was walking around the school building across from their church facility and saw the door open to the church where the preacher was recording a YouTube lesson.

She was looking for a church and came in, studied with the preacher, and obeyed the gospel. They've been working on the baptistery, so the water was cold. The preacher says that it took her a while to sit down, but even with her shaking she was a trooper and put the Lord on in baptism. Nina has attended the church there for most of her life. The preacher says that she and her sister were part of the kids he and his wife had been working with over the past 20 years. He says that she used to come to church hungry, as did other children, so they started a breakfast program many years back. Her sister was baptized several years ago, but Nina moved away. She recently came back for a visit, and asked to be baptized. The preacher explains that she and others like her are the reason why it's so important to work with the children. He says, "So many of the children we work with have troubled homes, impoverished homes and no Christian training what so ever. Nina is proof our work for the Lord is not in vain." And then Enzo is a young man from the Philippines who was in town visiting his sister. He wanted to obey the gospel, so they studied together, and Enzo was ready! Great things are happening in Arizona!

We have a quick post concerning a baptism somewhere in Finland this week. We don't know her name or exactly where this is, but we do know that it must have been cold! We have a hole cut in a frozen lake, and we do have an awesome beard! But, good news out of Finland this week!

And then we have many others, including Esther Briscoe (in the upper left), who was baptized this week over in New Haven, Connecticut. And then, moving clockwise, Emmanuel was baptized in Liberia this week. Linda obeyed the gospel down in Martin, Tennessee. Casey and Claire, brother and sister, were baptized at the Palm Beach Lakes congregation down in Florida. And finally, two were baptized in Vero Beach, Florida, this week. We share all of these to illustrate what it means to obey the gospel, and if we can help in some way, please get in touch. You know me – I like to get outside after worship, so meet me on the sidewalk or get in touch by using the contact information on the front of the bulletin.

This morning, we return to our series of lessons on Hebrews. The book itself is described as *"a word of exhortation"* and is written by an unknown author to some Christians who were perhaps having a hard time listening to Jesus. And the theme of the book is: JESUS IS BETTER. He is a BETTER MESSENGER, he is ENTHRONED ON HIGH, and a for these reasons, we must PAY MUCH CLOSER ATTENTION so that we do not drift away from it.

This morning, we continue with the rest of Hebrews 2. The author has already established that Jesus is worthy of praise (that Jesus is God), and now he makes the point that Jesus is ONE OF US. And so, this morning, we focus in on the Lord's humanity, and in particular, we look at some of the benefits to Jesus being ONE OF US. These are the benefits to Jesus coming to this earth in human form. Let's look at Hebrews 2:5-18, and as we do, let's keep an eye out for several word pictures, illustrations describing the benefits of Jesus becoming ONE OF US – this is Hebrews 2:5-18,

⁵ For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. ⁶ But one has testified somewhere, saying,

"WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM?

OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM?

⁷ "YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS;

YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR,

AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;

⁸ YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET."

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. ⁹ But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.

*¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² saying,
"I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN,
IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE."*

*¹³ And again,
"I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM."*

*And again,
"BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME."*

¹⁴ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

¹⁶ For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

As we think about what we've just read, I'd like for us to go back a piece at a time, and let's notice some benefits to Jesus becoming one of us.

- I. And let's notice, first of all (in verses 5-10) that because he came to this earth in human form, Jesus has become a **TRAILBLAZER**.

And this starts in verses 5-8 (on the left up here), where the author starts by describing a problem. The problem is: As human beings, we were designed to rule the earth. Adam and Eve were placed in the garden and were told to manage it. However, they sinned, they got kicked out of the garden, and ever since then we've pretty much been lost. We don't really have dominion, but instead, we need a champion, we need somebody to lead the way through life, and that's where Jesus steps in (in verses 9-10, on the right up here). Sin brought death. Sin separated us from God. Jesus, though, came to this earth to solve the problem. He came to this earth to lead the way, to lead the way back to God.

But think about this for just a moment: What if Jesus came to this earth but only stayed here for a few hours, or maybe a weekend? That would be awesome! But that doesn't quite do it. In verse 9, Jesus came that he might *"taste death for everyone."* In other words, in order to lead us, he needed to experience what we experience. And in verse 10, it was *"fitting"* for God to *"perfect"* the *"author"* of our salvation through sufferings. The Lord, then, went above and beyond. It wasn't that Jesus was imperfect before coming here, but the word *"perfect"* is used here in the sense of learning something through experience. Through his suffering,

then, Jesus became truly worthy to lead the way. And this is where we get to the word *“author,”* the idea that Jesus is the *“author of our salvation.”* We will get back to this phrase in Hebrews 12:2, but it’s a word that refers to “someone who goes before.” It refers to “someone who goes first.” This is why the KJV says that Jesus is the *“captain”* of our salvation. Back in 1611, a captain was someone who led his troops into battle. Other translations refer to Jesus as being the *“pioneer,”* or the *“leader,”* or the *“founder”* of our salvation. In the ancient world, this word was used to refer to the guy in the army who carried the machete, hacking his way through the brush and the weeds, leading the way so that others could follow.

I brought my grandfather’s machete with me this morning. This is a treasured possession. When I got this after he passed away, the wooden handle was splintered in pieces, so to honor his memory, I found some scrap hickory and rebuilt the handle – to fit the blade, but also to fit my hand – and I keep it in a place of honor in my study. But this is what this word means. When the author of Hebrews says that Jesus is the *“author”* of our salvation, he’s saying that Jesus has gone first, he leads the way. He has blazed the trail for us.

So, it’s one thing to give an order, but it’s quite another thing to go first. Jesus leads, then, through experience. He came to this earth, not just for a few hours or a weekend, but he was born into a poor family, and he lived here for 33-½ years. You know, I can learn something about a place like China by reading a Wikipedia article, I could learn quite a bit more by going over there for a week or so, but to truly understand that culture, I would need to move in and spend the rest of my life there. By the way, I’ve lived in Wisconsin for right around 30 years now. I am just now starting to understand you people! But that’s what Jesus has done for us: He was born here, and he lived among us, so that he could lead the way. He is our trailblazer. He leads the way back to God, teaching through his perfect life how to defeat temptation. Have we ever been tempted to the point where we think we have no choice but to give in? He’s been there. Have we been betrayed by a close friend? He shows us how to react. Have we suffered physically? He’s been there. Have we suffered emotionally? He’s been there. Have we ever wept bitterly over the death of a loved one? He’s been there. He leads us personally on the narrow path. He is our trailblazer.

II. Secondly, though, the author of Hebrews also describes Jesus as our OLDER BROTHER.

We see this in verses 11-13. In verse 11, we have a reference to God as our Father, and then we find that Jesus *“is not ashamed to call us brethren.”* We have another reference to *“brethren”* (in verse 12), and then we have a reference to *“children”* (in verse 13). But the idea is: Jesus is one of us! And he’s family! Elsewhere in scripture, God’s people are called disciples, and servants, and friends, but *“brothers”* is a family term.

You know, sometimes we may be ashamed of our own family – maybe we are embarrassed by their behavior, or maybe by their appearance, or maybe by their political views – but we find here, that in spite of our imperfections, the Lord is not ashamed of us. In fact, he seems honored to call us *“brothers.”* And what a blessing that is! I am very thankful to have a good relationship with my own earthly sister. If I get in some kind of trouble, I can go to her for advice and encouragement. If there’s anything she can do to help me, I know she would do it. In the same way, if there’s something I could do to help her, I would do it. If somebody walked up to me on the street and asks me to help them move a piano, I’d have to think about that. But if my sister calls and needs help with something, there’s really not much of a discussion. There’s nothing to decide. And that seems to be the kind of relationship Jesus has with us. He is our older brother.

In fact, there’s a sense in which Jesus should be even closer to us than our own physical siblings. Jesus, of course, was rejected by his own family (at least at first), and the Bible tells us in John 1:11-13, *“He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the*

right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." What an encouragement this must have been to those who heard this message the very first time! Here they are, rejected by their own families, perhaps meeting in secret to avoid persecution, and the author of Hebrews reminds them that Jesus is not ashamed to call us *"brothers."* And it's also encouraging to us today.

III. So, Jesus is a TRAILBLAZER, he is our OLDER BROTHER, and in this next little paragraph we find that he is our DELIVERER, our LIBERATOR.

And in verses 14-15, we find that because he is one of us, Jesus is able to set us free from the fear of death. We will still die, we may still be nervous about what comes next, but Jesus frees us from the *"fear of death,"* the kind of fear that is described here as *"slavery."* Over in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul refers to Jesus removing the *"sting of death."* The *"sting of death"* is sin. The sting of death is the thought of jumping from the frying pan into the fire, the idea of perhaps dying a miserable death and then waking up in torment. Jesus takes that fear away. Being lost eternally is a fear that we, thanks to Jesus, no longer have. He has delivered us from the fear of death. He has set us free from the power of death. He has delivered us from it. And he can do this because he is one of us, *"he himself likewise also partook of the same,"* the author says.

IV. So, Jesus is a TRAILBLAZER, he is our OLDER BROTHER, he is our DELIVERER, and in the last few verses we are just barely introduced to the idea that because Jesus is one of us, he has now become our MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST.

And Jesus can only do this because he has been *"made like his brethren in all things."* A high priest is someone who intercedes. A high priest is a go-between. A high priest makes *"propitiation for the sins of the people."* The word *"propitiation"* refers an atoning sacrifice, it's the idea of making things okay between us and God. We've sinned, so there's this uneasiness between us. Well, Jesus, as our high priest, bridges that gap, he keeps the path open. Under the Law of Moses, the priests did this continually, and the reason is: The people sinned continually! I might compare it to shoveling snow during a blizzard. Two or three weeks ago, we got an inch of snow on a Sunday morning, and it was a weird event, because it was just hard to keep up with. I shoveled once when I got here around 6:45, but by the time I got to the end of the sidewalk and turned around, I could see my own foot prints where I had just shoveled, so I had to do it again before everybody got here. But that illustrates the work of a priest. They could offer sacrifices all day long, but even as they killed an animal to cover one sin, somebody else was sinning all over again; and over and over. Their work was never done. But Jesus offered himself once, and that was enough. In 1 Peter 3:18, Peter says, *"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit."* As a merciful and faithful high priest, he made propitiation, he paid the price.

But because he is one of us, because he was tempted through what he suffered, that means he can also *"come to the aid of those who are tempted."* He understands what we are going through. He understands how hard it is to resist temptation. And this right here is our greatest struggle, the struggle with sin. We think it's hard to stick to a budget. We think it's hard to get good grades in school. We think it's hard to lose weight or get in shape. These things may be hard, but these things don't even come close to how hard it is to face temptation. And I say this, because God says that *"all [of us] have sinned"* (Romans 3:23). Jesus, though, because he was tempted and resisted sin, he can come to our aid. He knows what we are going through, and he can help us.

Conclusion:

This morning, we've looked at the fact that Jesus is one of us. In Chapter 1, we learned that Jesus is God – he is a better messenger, he is enthroned on high; therefore (in Chapter 2), we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away from it. And today, we've learned that Jesus is also one of us. He blazes the trail for us, he is our older brother, he is our deliverer, and he is our faithful and merciful high priest. Why is this important?

- Without Jesus, we would be lost, stranded and alone, out in the middle of nowhere, with no one to lead the way out of sin.
- Without Jesus, we would be separated from God, not a part of God's family, there would be no relationship.
- Without Jesus, we would be completely terrified of death and what comes next. We would be slaves to that fear.
- And without Jesus, we would be lost in sin with no way of ever being reconciled to God, with no one to bridge the gap.

Thankfully, though, we have Jesus! He leads the way back to God, he came to this earth to establish a relationship, he freed us from the fear of death, and he now serves as a perfect high priest, pleading our case before God. And this is encouraging to us. In fact, this is the point of this passage. Jesus is better! Therefore, let's not turn back, but let's consider Jesus.

Michael has chosen a song to prepare our hearts and minds for the Lord's Supper, but before we sing, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the one and only all-powerful God, and we praise you this morning as our Father. You sent your only Son into this world to live among us. He experienced life as we do, and now he intercedes for us and shows us the way back to you.

We come to you through Jesus, our Savior and Lord. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com