

Christ Our High Priest

Lord, may Your Spirit work, I pray. Amen.

There is a song that I love, and I know all of you do also. “How deep the Father’s love for us; it is vast, it is beyond all measure.” How deep is the Father’s love for us! It is so vast, it is just beyond all measure. Today I feel a little fear of trepidation because I was going to change the message today about thirty minutes ago because it was on my heart to share about the Lord as our High Priest, and some of the verses that I want to use have already been used. Then I said, “Lord, that is just Your way.” So it is a wonderful thing to know the Spirit is moving. So today we will be in Hebrews, and we want to consider the Lord Jesus as our High Priest. It is such a vast message subject that I am just going to pick just what God has been raising up in my heart. There may be many things you might say, “Why didn’t you say that?” You know, when you are meditating in the Word, there are some things that just strike you as the Holy Spirit seems to move. So that is what I will be sharing.

Hebrews 3:1b: “Consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.”

Today we want to consider the Lord Jesus. This is to look intently, to gaze upon Him as we have already been doing in our worship; to gaze upon the Lord as our High Priest.

What is the high priest? What does he do? Fortunately, in Hebrews the Lord gives us the answer, a New Testament answer.

Hebrews 5:1-5: “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was. So also Christ

did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU""

The Father Appointed Jesus as High Priest

The Father is the One that called Jesus the High Priest. A high priest must be taken from among men. By the way, all these things Jesus fulfilled in His high priestly ministry. Every high priest must be taken from among men. And every high priest is appointed on behalf of men and things pertaining to God. So the high priest, especially in the Old Testament, even the Lord Jesus, was the go-between, as it were, between sin and the holiness, the wrath of God. And that high priest would offer the appropriate sacrifice to appease the Father's wrath, the holiness of God.

Two things jumped out to me as I was meditating on this section of Scripture. First of all, the Father appointed Jesus to be the High Priest. It was not Jesus' idea. This idea came from the Father Himself. He was appointed by God the Father.

Hebrews 3:2a: "He was faithful to Him who appointed Him," as High Priest.

So the Father appointed Jesus to be the High Priest, the go-between. And I just want to get this off my chest. In today's world, the world looks upon God the Father, with disdain because He is a wrathful judging God who hates us. Jesus, we can take because He is full of love and tolerance. But the Father, "No, we cannot stand Him." I heard that this week by someone I talked with. And as I was studying this, it just broke my heart because the idea of the high priest was from God the Father. It is almost as if God the Father sees His holy wrath, His holy glory and He sees sinful man, something must be done because God the Father loves the sinner, but His wrath and holiness has to be vindicated. So He sent His Son. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. He sent His Son to give us life, but He also appointed His Son to be the High Priest for

us. God the Father did that. Jesus did not glorify Himself to become the High Priest (v. 5), but the Father appointed Him.

The Gentle and Kind High Priest

The second thing that jumped out to me. Frankly, it is almost embarrassing. Have you ever read through the Scripture and seen a verse, and thought, I have never seen that before. This happened to me in verse 2. This high priest offers up the sacrifices, but evidently he does it in a gentle way. “He can deal gently with the ignorant and the misguided.” “Lord, that is me, ignorant and misguided.” But the high priest, even in the Old Testament, was not just a butcher who cut up the sacrifice and put it on the altar. We think of the law in the Old Testament that way, but the high priest even then dealt gently with the people. Did you know that? I did not realize that.

All of that is a picture of our Lord Jesus. How gentle and kind He is as High Priest. We can already see that the Lord Jesus did not appoint Himself as the High Priest. He obeyed His Father, and He is a gentle and kind High Priest.

In Hebrews 2 we are going to consider why or how the Lord became our High Priest, and this will touch your heart.

Hebrews 2:17a: “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest.”

It seems to say that if He was going to be merciful and faithful in His ministry as High Priest, something had to happen. And what was that? He had to be made like His brethren in all things. That is the basis for our next section.

Hebrews 2:10-13: “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. 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, saying, “I WILL

PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, 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 WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.""

Verses 14-16: "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, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all of their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham."

Verse 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."

What verses do you see in there that speak of Him becoming like His brethren? What did He have to do?

I want to share a little bit about brethren. Jesus calls us His brothers. Isn't that an amazing thing? He identifies so much with us that we are called His brethren. And He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Now some of you might be a little embarrassed if you had to go somewhere and say, "Yeah, well, Roger is there. It is a little embarrassing sometimes. He is an embarrassing brother; I am a little embarrassed of him." I would never say that about anyone of you. But you know the Lord Jesus it seems to me would have every right to say, "Yeah, there is a lot of My brethren I am ashamed of. They are pretty rotten, not very good." But you know, brothers, He is not ashamed to call us brethren because we are all from one Father, and that is a blessing. Later on we will see what He has done, but brothers and sisters, we are His brethren, and He is not ashamed of us. What a blessing that is! Now He had to be like His brethren in all things.

The Lord Jesus Shares in Our Flesh and Blood

Verse 14a: “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself also partook of the same.”

So He had to partake of flesh and blood just as you and I. He was begotten of the Father, and a body was prepared for Him, and He shared in flesh and blood just as we did.

The Lord Jesus is Perfected through Suffering

Verse 10b: “to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.”

Verse 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.” (He suffered death.)

Hebrews 5:7a: “In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears.”

Verse 8: “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.”

So it seems that this whole section is talking about Jesus as our High Priest, and for Him to be made like His brethren in all things, suffering and hardship was how it was going to be done. What two Scriptures can you think of that tell us the most about His suffering? Give me the first one in the prophets.

Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. We are going to read those together, and as we read them, just let the Holy Spirit say, “This is what He did for you to become like His brethren.”

Isaiah 53:3-5, 7, 10a: “He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs

He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried. Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed...He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter; and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth...But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief."

So often, and rightly so, we equate suffering to the suffering Lamb. Yes, of course, that is correct, but also His suffering is part of what God the Father uses so that He might become like His brethren.

Psalm 22 is a prophetic psalm of the anguish of our Lord Jesus, the suffering that He experienced on the cross. It is almost as if a thousand years before the crucifixion, here the Holy Spirit tells you what Jesus is feeling inside.

Verses 1-2, 6-21: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; and by night, but I have no rest...But I am a worm and not a man, a reproach of men and despised by the people. All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, Commit yourself to the Lord. let Him deliver him; let Him rescue him, because He delights in him. Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb; You made me trust when upon my mother's breasts. Upon You I was cast from birth; You have been my God from my mother's womb. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They open wide their mouth at me, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me;

they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. But You, O Lord, be not far off; O You my help, hasten to my assistance. Deliver my soul from the sword, my only life from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth; from the horns of the wild oxen You answer me."

This seems to be the Lord's heart, what He was feeling, what He was suffering on the cross of Calvary. The second thing He said right before the end, "It is finished." But what were the two words He said before that? He said, "I thirst." Minutes before our Lord passed away, He gave up the Ghost and said, "I thirst." Showing us His humanity that in the very end He said, "I thirst." His body was tortured. What the Lord went through at that time! It pleased the Lord to crush Him to be the Lamb.

Hebrews 2:17a: "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."

The Lord Jesus is a Compassionate High Priest

This word "merciful" means "compassionate." He is a compassionate High Priest. We have a compassionate High Priest, and He is not compassionate because He is omniscient and knows everything, therefore He is compassionate and knows what you are feeling. No, He experienced in His earthly life pain and suffering, testing, trying just like you and I. He has gone through the storms that you and I go through, and as our High Priest He can be compassionate for that reason.

Hebrews 4:15a: "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses."

So we have a High Priest who can sympathize with our weakness. I am not a very good sympathizer. A sympathizer is someone who suffers with. Our Lord Jesus sympathizes with you and me. So we have a compassionate High Priest, and we have a High Priest who can

sympathize with us, going through everything that we have gone through. And that work of the High Priest in the heavens is so important because we are not left alone through all the trials we go through. Brothers and sisters, just know we have a compassionate sympathizing High Priest.

Hebrews 8:1: “Now the main point of what has been said is this: We have such a High Priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”

Such a High Priest we have who now is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.

Hebrews 9:24: “For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

Notice two words at the very end, “now to appear in the heavenly place for us.” Other sections of Scripture say, “We have a High Priest who has gone into the heavens.” We have a High Priest who shared in flesh and blood, who is sympathetic and compassionate to us, now seated at the right hand of the Father. And this simple thought has stuck with me that our Lord Jesus did not forget all of His suffering on earth, all the storms that He went through, all the trials and testings that He went through, when He went to sit at His Father’s right hand. Isn’t that amazing? Our High priest is for us, and I am so thrilled with that because we look back on bad times and want to forget them. We look back on suffering and say that was a bad dream; I want to go on to something better. But our Lord Jesus remembers all that He went through, and now He can sympathize with us. That is a wonderful thing. He has gone into the very heavens for us. So we have a High Priest, compassionate, now seated at the right hand of the Father, not forgetting all that He went through.

Hebrews 7:24: "But Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently."

So our Lord Jesus holds His priesthood permanently, *our* High Priest, the One for us who is raised and seated forever, holds that priesthood.

Hebrews 7:25: "Therefore He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

The Lord Jesus Lives to Make Intercession for Us

There are three points in that verse. "He is able to save forever those who draw near to God since He always lives to make intercession for them." So you have those who draw near because He always lives to make intercession for them. If He did not intercede for us there is no saving forever. The first phrase and the last phrase go together. He is able to save forever since He always lives to make intercession for them. How important is the praying of our Lord Jesus as High Priest in intercession for us. The only way we can draw near to God the Father is through Jesus Christ as the One who purchased us and who is the One who is praying for us.

There is a wonderful quote that I want to read from John Owen. He was a Puritan, and his English is very old English.

"The safest conception that can be had of the intercession of Christ is His continual appearance for us in the presence of God by virtue of His office of High Priest over the house of God, representing the efficacy of His out-poured blood, accompanied with tender care, love and desires for the welfare supplied deliverance in salvation of the church."

That is the safest conception. That means if you want to be safe with what intercession means, that is the safest thing you can say. That is what I have always thought. The praying part I was not so sure about before I studied Hebrews.

The Lord Jesus, as our High Priest, is at the right hand of the Father. All that He has done on the cross through His body being broken for us and the efficacy of His outpoured blood. And by virtue of just being there He is interceding with what He has done to the Father, and that is intercession.

The presentation of His Person before the throne of God on our behalf is truth. The representation of His death, His shed blood and sacrifice, which gives power and life and efficacy on His intercession, that is true. But these do not render it prayer, for intercession is prayer, therefore there is in intercession a requesting and offering to God of His desires and will for the church, attended with care, with love and compassion. Isn't that wonderful? That is the praying intercession of our Lord Jesus. How can He do it with compassion? He is a compassionate loving, sympathetic High Priest before the Father right now for you and I.

I was so touched by this because we are weak, fallible, and none of us are perfect by any means; yet we are to draw near. Now how can we draw near? Our Lord Jesus intercedes and understands all of our weaknesses, and He prays for us to be able to draw near. His blood is interceding so that I can confess, "Lord, I am so sorry for my sin." He is an advocate before the Father. The Father listens to the Son in that advocacy. He sees His Son, He sees His blood, He sees what He did on the cross, and our High Priest prays for us in our weakness that we might draw near. So in conclusion let's turn to two Scriptures.

Hebrews 4:14-16: "Therefore, since 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 cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

You and I can go into the very presence of God through Jesus Christ as our intercessor. “I need help; I have great need.” And you are not looked down upon with shame because you are weak. He is not ashamed of us. And He will supply everything that we need because of His intercessory work before the Father for us. That is why we can draw near as weak Christians with confidence. Otherwise you could not draw near to the heavenly Father.

God’s People Can Draw Near with a Sincere Heart

Hebrews 10:19-22: “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

“Since we have a great High Priest.” Brothers and sisters, don’t you find it wonderful that Jesus is our High Priest, always interceding for us?

Let’s pray:

Father, we worship You for the great love that You have shown to us, Your out-poured heart of compassion even for us, that You would provide Your Son to be the sacrifice for our sins, that You would appoint Your Son to be the great High Priest, even to sit at Your right hand to intercede. Father, we love that You hear Him, that You listen to Him, that everything He prays for will happen. Lord, what a God we have! What provision we have in You! And we praise You and worship You. Amen.