



May 3, 2026

Anchored in a Great High Priest. (Hebrews 4)

Hebrews 4:14-16 (ESV)

Jesus the Great High Priest

14 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. **15** 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. **16** 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.

- In the Old Testament sacrificial system, the office of priest was special. All priests had to be a member of the tribe of Levi. Priest had to be without blemish. No deformities, no blindness, no skin problems. The purpose was for them to reflect God's perfection and holiness.
- A priest was not made. A Priest was born.
- The high priest, one day a year, on Yom Kippur, would go alone into the innermost part of the tabernacle, or later the temple, where God's ark was, where God's mercy seat was. He would bring the blood of a sacrifice. And the names on his chest meant he was bringing the whole nation with him so he could atone for their sin. In order to do this, the high priest had to be holy.
- The important note to make, is that a priest never faced the people. He always faced away from them. He faced God on their behalf. A priest did not speak to people. He didn't

preach or teach or counsel. A priest instead, spoke for people. He represented them before God.

- The word priest means bridge builder. And that's what a priest would do. He would build a bridge through sacrifices and prayers so that men had a chance to get to God.
- There were two things that were crucial for a priest to be effective in God's priestly system.

An effective priest had to be like the people.

- What we need in that moment of crisis, is someone who understands. We need a priest that can relate to us.
- You need an advocate. You need someone who is like you. A person who has been there before and assures you there's a way out.

An effective priest needs to be unlike the people.

- What we need in a priest is someone whose been through the dark valley and can say with confidence, *There's is a way out!*
- What we don't need is someone wandering in the valley with us, terrified of the dark, saying *I don't know if there's a way out either!*
- You need someone who is unlike you in that they have won. They're in a strong place compared to you. They have more hope than you. They know the way out when you are scratching in the dark.

In our text we learn that we have the very most perfect priest.

- "*We do not have a priest who is unable to sympathize with us, but we have one who is **as we are.***" Then what's the very next word? **Yet.**
- *As we are...yet.* Jesus is just like us. *As we are.* Yet, he's not like us. He's not exactly as we are. This makes him the perfect priest.

He is as we are.

- How? In that he was **tempted** in every way, just like us.
- Maybe, because Jesus was fully God, he was **not able** to sin.
- Or, Maybe Jesus was **able not** to sin, even though he was fully human?
- Hebrews answers: It's the second!
- Here's what we get to say, because the preacher lays it out: Jesus was without sin. Fully God. Fully man. And without sin.
- What Jesus experienced...all of the temptations in Jesus' life...**were just like ours.**
- It means at least that all the temptation Jesus had in his life carried with it the possibility that he might give in and sin. Just like us.
- Jesus has experienced every struggle that you have. He's gone through it too.
- He is **as we are.**

- Somebody will always say, at this point, *Hold on. He's experienced everything we have?*
- But what's at the heart of these things that we go through? What do we feel in a miscarriage? In a divorce? At a football game?
- We feel disappointment. Loneliness. Rejection. Abandonment. Alienation.
- When it says here that Jesus experienced everything just like we have...he has.
- No, Jesus never went through a tornado like you have. But Jesus has experienced the same loss just the same.
- Jesus has gone through so much more than even the worst sufferers in this room.
- Jesus has been rejected. He's been grieved. He knows loss and pain and death and misunderstanding. He's been on the table. He is *as we are*.

And yet...

- He was without sin. Every experience he had where he had to choose whether to obey God or not, he chose the right thing.
- And so at the very same time that he is as we are...he's also not. He's so *unlike* us.
- Jesus never sinned.
- The very best empathizers are people who have learned to put themselves aside and can then enter in to someone else's hurt. They lay their own hurt aside. It's very hard because sin always says *me first*.
- Sinlessness doesn't hinder Jesus being able to sympathize with you. His sinlessness actually makes him the perfect person to be able to sympathize with you.
- He was totally burned, just like you. But he's also totally pure, loving, godly, unlike you.
- Jesus is never in the middle of his own junk he's sorting through. So he can be in the middle of your junk.
- Jesus has none of the sin that would make sympathy hard, and yet he has all of the experiences that created the sympathy in the first place.
- He's the perfect priest. *Like us so he can sympathize. Unlike us so he can help.*

The preacher says we *have* this kind of great high priest. Not *did have*. Not *one day we will have*. No...we *have*. Right now, we have a great high priest, Jesus.

Because we have this kind of great high priest, who knows the hell is us, but can see us to the heavens: *"Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*