



Hebrews 2:14-18
 Hebrews: Seeing Jesus Clearly
 “One of Us”

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We began a new series last week walking through the Book of Hebrews. As we saw, Hebrews opens by declaring that God has spoken definitively in the Son. While the name “Jesus” is not used in chapter 1, it becomes clear later in chapter 2 that Jesus is this Son. And in the span of just 3 verses in chapter 1, the author names 10 defining truths about Jesus, such as: he is the heir of all things, Creator and sustainer of all things, the radiance of God’s glory, the exact imprint of God’s nature, seated at the right and of the Majesty, and superior to the angels.

In chapter 2 we begin to see the implications of this for humanity. The opening verses tell us that because God’s revelation through the Son is supreme, neglecting him brings grave danger. Salvation comes through this Son. Verse 3 asks, “How shall we escape [just punishment] if we ignore so great a salvation?”

In 2:6-8, Psalm 8 is quoted and it shows God’s purpose for humanity: that we are created to be crowned with glory and given dominion. Now, our glory is a reflection of God’s glory...so it’s a “lesser glory.” And dominion doesn’t mean domination but stewardship of creation on behalf of God. That’s the purpose as we see in Psalm 8 and it reflects what we read in Genesis. But humanity has completely failed. We do not live into that reality. Jesus, however, fulfills humanity’s destiny through his incarnation, becoming truly human and living with proper glory and dominion. And so, through Jesus, redeemed humanity shares in restored glory and dominion – all for the sake of God’s glory.

This sets up our passage today, Hebrews 2:14-18, which is a deeper dive into Jesus becoming one of us in order to redeem us to this place of restored glory and dominion. So, let’s turn to Hebrews 2:14-18. This is God’s Word to you and me today...

In many ways this passage is familiar to those of us who have followed Jesus for some time. It teaches that Jesus became human for a particular purpose: to suffer as atonement for the sins of the people and by doing so to set us free from the power of the devil and death. Yet the language and imagery can feel unfamiliar, so let's walk through it together.

In verse 14, we read about “the children.” This language comes from the previous verse, which quotes Isaiah 8:18, ***“Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion” (Isaiah 8:18; Hebrews 2:13 in italics).*** In Isaiah, the prophet speaks of himself and his children as available for service to God and signs in Israel of God's activity.

In Hebrews, however, these words are placed on the lips of Jesus. Now, Jesus is never recorded saying these exact words. But it doesn't matter. They are true of him. His life and teaching display complete availability and obedience to God in a way Isaiah only foreshadowed. Jesus fulfills these words. They are accurate to who he was. Again we see a theme that I mentioned last week that “Jesus is better” or “Jesus is superior.” What was partial in Isaiah is perfectly fulfilled in Jesus.

“The children” now in Hebrews refer not to Isaiah's children, but to those who put their faith in Jesus. To Jesus they are his brothers and sisters – which is language Jesus himself used to describe his followers – and therefore, they are children of God the Father. Because these children share flesh and blood Jesus also shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of the one who holds the power of death: the devil.

Some Christians, and certainly many non-Christians, struggle to believe in the devil, who is also called Satan. And those are just different names, but it's the same spiritual being. Yet Scripture presents him as real, and his power is bound up with death. Jesus sets us free from that power and redeems us to our right relationship with the God of life.

Verse 16 says it's not the angels Jesus helps, but Abraham's descendants. Jesus didn't come to redeem angels. That might seem like an obvious or silly statement, but there's a reason for all the discussion about angels in these first two chapters. **Angels are revered heavenly beings who serve God in both the Old Testament and the New.** They play an important role in Scripture. They are the Cherubim, the Seraphim, the Archangel Michael, they are the angelic hosts which is simply a vast number of angels serving God. Their primary function when it comes to us humans is to act as messengers and agents of God's presence.

By the first century, a widespread belief held that angels mediated between God and Moses when the Law was given at Mount Sinai as recorded in Exodus 19-24. Scripture often portrays angels speaking for God and even embodying his presence. This understanding of angels as God's mediators to Moses appears in passages such as Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19, which say the Law was given through angels. This helps explain why the first couple chapters of Hebrews emphasize that Jesus is better than the angels: If angels mediated the Law and were God's representatives, how much greater is the Son as God's "representative" and who brings salvation through this New Covenant that he embodies?

So, just as the law was given to help people, so Jesus also came to help us. **And in order to truly help us, he had to become one of us.** You know, when my son's 2nd grade basketball team is playing a game, I can help from the stands as a parent or from the sidelines as a coach. But there's only so much I can do. Imagine if I were able to make myself a second grader on their team with my adult mind and physical capabilities! I'd be the Michael Jordan of second grade basketball. It would probably be all downhill from there, but I could really help their team. Obviously, I can't do that.

Jesus has, for us. He left the heavenly throne room and became one of us because that is how he helps us the most. If we were created in flesh and blood for glory and dominion, then one who shares our flesh and blood must redeem us. And that's what we get in verse 17. **"For this reason [to help Abraham's descendants, and by extension through faith, other humans as**

well] he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17). This restates verse 14, but adds necessity – he *had* to become like us in order to redeem us.

Verse 18 adds an important insight, “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted...” Let’s look at just that for a moment. **When you resist temptation, you suffer more than when you give in.** When you give in, you have immediate gratification and satisfaction. But the satisfaction will fade, and consequences may follow, but resisting temptation involves real suffering in the moment.

Think about Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness just before the start of his public ministry. Hungry and weak, the devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread – to go against his heavenly Father’s will and to selfishly use his power for his own benefit. Instead, he resisted, and he stayed hungry. There’s the suffering.

We might face similar temptations. The temptation of indulgence because ice cream is in the freezer; the temptation of impatience and driving too fast; the temptation of selfishness, the temptation of lust, of pride, of greed...the list goes on. When we resist, we suffer in the short term because the craving, the temptation, goes unfulfilled. This is a timely word for us in this season of Lent.

But Jesus didn’t become human for the short term. He came for the long term. The eternal. The everlasting. Short term suffering in resisting of temptation is worth the long-term eternal joy. That’s what Jesus models and what he did for us and ultimately for the glory of God.

So, let’s finish this last verse. **Because he suffered and resisted temptation, “...he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18b).** This does not only refer to specific temptations; it is a way of saying he’s able to help those who are human. Temptation is part of the human condition. Jesus helps us because he put on flesh and became one of us. And as we read earlier

in this passage: his help has a purpose: to break the power of death and “free those who all their lives were held in slavery by fear of death.” Verse 15 expresses this so profoundly.

When you know that the other side of the grave is secure because of Jesus...that he became one of us to save us and redeem us for God’s purposes...when you know that you need not fear the grave...it frees you up to really live. To live as God intended – with this glory and dominion, here and now imperfectly, and fully in the life to come. Jesus says he came to give abundant life. Real peace. Lasting peace. Not the false peace that the world offers. That is life no longer enslaved to death.

And at some level, we all wrestle with this. **Fear of death often operates beneath the surface, but it shapes individuals and societies alike.** In his 1973 book, *The Denial of Death*, Ernest Becker argued that human culture functions as a collective defense against the terror of mortality. I would suggest that we see this fear at work in modern ambitions to escape death by escaping earth itself. Like Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk investing enormous sums of money in figuring out how to move humanity off of earth and live in outer space in other environments—whether Mars, the moon, space stations, or whatever other idea they’ll cook up.

But the deeper problem is not geography. God has already given us the conditions for life here on earth. Out of all the cosmos, *this is the place*. And if we desire life elsewhere beyond this world, God has made that possible, through Jesus. **Jesus is where our fear of death is conquered and our hope for life beyond here and now is secured.**

And it’s because Jesus became one of us. He suffered temptation, but did not give in. He made atonement for our sin through his death. He restores to us the glory and dominion that God intended for humanity—in part now, and in full in the life to come—and it’s all so that God would be glorified. So, keep turning to and trusting in Jesus.

This season of Lent leading up to Easter is a great time to be particularly intentional about that. Easter Sunday is all about the glory of God in Jesus Christ...that the power of death is defeated, that we need not be slaves to the fear of death any longer and instead have hope for eternity because of Jesus. So, keep leaning into Jesus, keep following Him wherever you are on that path, putting one foot in front of the other. Keep trusting his mercy as he helps us in this life and the life to come – all to the full and final glory of God. Let's pray...Amen.