

Jesus' Identification with Our Broken World

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading comes from Hebrews chapter 4. Please follow along on the screen the bulletin of your own Bible.

Starting in verse 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. 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.

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.

[1 : 19] This is the word of God. Amen. Thanks Joyce for reading the passage for us today. Morning everybody.

Morning. That was fantastic. Wow. We're all awake. We had our coffee. If you don't know me, my name is Oscar. I did come to Watermark for over 10 years now.

My wife and I actually met at Watermark. So it does happen. We have three children. I don't want to plant any seeds or hopes. But I'm just saying it happens.

And together with our three children, Axel, Kieve, and Elliot, we serve here at Watermark. This is our church. This is our family. Let me pray for us as we dive into God's word today.

Father God, thank you that your word changes us. Thank you that your word is powerful. That it's not me, Oscar, just giving an interesting talk because of some great research I did, Lord.

[2 : 22] But your word is powerful. It penetrates deep into our hearts. It transforms us. It convicts us of sin. It shows us the beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It transforms us. So, God, today I pray that as we consider your word, this passage from Hebrews, Lord, that you would work in all of our hearts, God.

I pray for our soft hearts today, for myself, for all of us today here that are listening. I pray, God, that we would not just consider the word and then think it's interesting and then leave, Lord, but we would be forever changed, transformed.

And we would respond to your word today by the power of your Holy Spirit. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So, this week we are continuing our sermon series on Advent.

And Advent is a time for us to celebrate, to prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. Some of us have been doing the Advent devotionals, which I have been just really blessed by.

[3 : 26] You know, as a church, we don't want Christmas to just be a time for us to consume a lot of food and wine and open a lot of presents.

Although I probably will gain a few pounds in the next few weeks. But our desire as a church is to be absolutely filled with the wonder and awe of the birth of Jesus.

We want to be blown away and excited about this. And so I encourage all of us to continue doing the Advent devotionals if we haven't been already. Now, last week, Chris kicked off this sermon series by teaching on how the Word became flesh.

Jesus, the Son of God, the creator of all the universe, He became flesh and moved into our neighborhood. And today, we're going to take one step further and look at how Jesus identifies with our broken world.

He identifies with our broken world. But first, let me ask us some questions. Why do we like people that are similar to us?

[4 : 34] Why is it that our friends are of the same educational, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds to us? Why is it that when we go through trauma, we seek out support groups where we can share our experiences with those who've had the same experience as us?

I think it's because all of us, at some level, desire to be known and to be understood. We desire to be in relationships with people that get us, that understand us.

We want to be in relationships with those who understand our quirks, our faults, our pain, but through it all, still love and accept us.

But then again, can anyone really get us or understand us? Even the most empathetic person in the world has never really stepped in our individual shoes, right?

But God has. God has stepped into our shoes in the person of Jesus when he came into the world and became one of us.

[5 : 40] Jesus perfectly knows us. He perfectly understands us. And yet, he perfectly loves us. Let's dive into this passage from Hebrews.

Now, the book of Hebrews was written to a Jewish audience in the first century, to those Jewish Christians who had previously put their faith and hope in Jesus, but had subsequently rejected Jesus, possibly because of suffering and persecution, and went back to their old Jewish religious beliefs.

And so the author of Hebrews attempts to show why Jesus, above all the other beings in the Old Testament, over all the other beings, is the supreme God.

And the author slowly walks through a number of comparisons to do this. In chapter 1, we read that Jesus is greater than the angels. Angels are these incredible heavenly beings, but Jesus is greater.

Because he's the son of God. The radiance of God's glory, who upholds the universe by the word of his power. Chapter 3 of Hebrews, we read that he's superior to Moses.

[6 : 51] Moses, the great patriarch of the Old Testament, who led God's people out of slavery in Egypt, who met God on Mount Sinai and brought down the Torah. But Jesus, greater than Moses.

Because Jesus came before Moses. He was there at the beginning, from eternity. Creating the world. Then we get to chapter 4 of Hebrews, where the author spends the next 6 chapters on this thesis, that Jesus is greater than the Old Testament high priest.

Now the author spends such a long time on this comparison, because the Old Testament high priest was a central leadership figure, who the people of Israel look to, to understand God.

But the author of Hebrews is saying, don't look to the Old Testament high priest to understand God. Look to Jesus, the great high priest, who is God.

And this is where we're going to focus on today. Let's look at Hebrews 4.14. The first verse of our very short passage today.

[7 : 56] And we read, 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. We don't hear this phrase high priest that much in the New Testament.

So, again, let's go back to the Old Testament to see what we can glean about this high priest. After the Exodus, God told Moses to build this tabernacle or tent, this sort of portable temple in the desert where God could meet with his people.

God also instructed Moses to establish priests to work and serve in the temple. And at the center of the priesthood was the office of the high priest, where only one man could serve at any time.

The high priest was distinguished from the rest of the priesthood. There were a number of special duties that the high priest had, the most important of which was that the high priest was the only person in all of Israel who one day a year, on the Day of Atonement, could go into this inner sanctuary, what's called the Most Holy Place, where God's presence literally dwelled.

And the high priest would come in with a sacrifice, to sacrifice for his own sin and for the sins of all of Israel that they committed over the past year. This is the point.

[9 : 18] God created this intricate system of the priesthood and within it the office of the high priest for one reason, to point us to the true high priest, the great high priest, and that is Jesus.

In the Old Testament, every story, every character, every prophecy, everything in the Old Testament is just a picture or a shadow of the Savior Messiah to come, our Lord Jesus.

And over a thousand years later, Jesus came. He was born into the world at Christmas. And the author of Hebrews is saying, okay, so you know about this Old Testament high priest.

He was one man who was supposed to be this mediator between man and God. Now pay attention. There is one who has come, who is far greater, far more worthy of glory, honor, and praise, and this is Jesus, our great high priest.

Why? Because Jesus' priesthood is perfect, permanent, and personal. His priesthood is perfect, permanent, and personal.

[10 : 32] It's a bit of a tongue twister, that one, doesn't it? Number one, his priesthood is perfect. Although the Old Testament high priest was the chief representative of Israel, standing before God in the tabernacle, he was still a mortal sinner like you and I.

Every year he had to offer an offering, a sacrifice for his own sin. But then at Christmas, God became flesh and moved into our neighborhood in Jesus, and he lived a perfect life on earth.

And Jesus doesn't stand in that earthly tabernacle. As our passage says, he is in the heavens. He has passed through the heavens, and right now, he is standing before the majestic Father, right now, advocating on behalf of you and I.

His priesthood is perfect. Second, his priesthood is permanent. The Old Testament high priest had to sacrifice bulls and goats every single year on the day of atonement for his own sin and for the sins of his people.

And when he died, his sons had to take over to do the same thing over and over and over again. But now, once and for all, at the end of the age, at God's appointed time, Jesus came into the world, lived a perfect life, and sacrificed himself on the cross.

[11 : 49] Just once. That's enough for all time. His priesthood is permanent. And third, his priesthood is personal.

Jesus didn't enter that most holy place with the blood of bulls or goats. He entered heaven, the heavenly tabernacle, with his own blood. In effect, Jesus is both the high priest and the sacrifice.

His priesthood is perfect, permanent, and personal. So therefore, because Jesus is the great high priest, let us hold fast our confession.

What is our confession? Well, it is the declaration that some of us have made here, in front of God, confessing that we desperately need him, that we can do nothing without him, and putting our faith and hope and lives in him.

But let's be honest. For some of us, it's been a tough slog ever since. We've had questions and doubts about our faith. For some of us, we struggle with temptation and sin constantly.

[12 : 58] For most of us, probably. And for some of us, life has just been messy. But today, God is calling us all to him. And wherever we are on our journey of faith, whether or not we are still asking questions about God, Jesus, and the Bible, or whether we have been a Christian all our lives, God is calling us, every single one of us, to him.

Let us hold fast our confession. Let's persevere together. And as we celebrate Advent, and prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus, let's be reminded that Jesus, the radiance of God's glory, who upholds the world by the word of his power, he could have been born in a gold palace, but he wasn't.

He was born in the unspectacular town of Bethlehem. He lived a humble, down-to-earth existence, teaching the gospel, roaming around, serving others.

So although Jesus is the great high priest, although he sits at the right hand of the majestic Father in heaven, ruling the heavens and the earth, because he was fully human, he has this incredible empathy and understanding for what we, his people, go through on a day-to-day basis.

Look at verse 15. For we do not have a great 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.

[14 : 32] Have you ever seen the TV show, Undercover Bosses? Nobody. Okay. Well, let me, okay, Ed Choi has. Okay. You have too much time to watch TV, Ed.

No one else does here in Hong Kong. Well, the premise of the show, basically, is that a CEO in each episode would go undercover and disguise himself and take a normal operational job.

And during that time in his normal operational working, he would realize how bad the working conditions are. He would realize how not good the compensation and benefits were.

And he also realized that his employees have a difficult life. Basically, the CEO doesn't really know what's going on at the ground level because he's so high up there in his office with so many layers in between him and the employees, the operational employees.

But it isn't like that with Jesus at all. Although he is the great king and the great high priest, he humbled himself, became a man. Philippians 2 says that although Jesus was God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form.

[15 : 54] He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Jesus was fully God.

He was also fully man. But because he was also fully man, he experienced the same emotional highs and lows that we all face.

Have you ever felt homesick with COVID? No one can travel. Clearly, no one's going home. But with COVID, travel basically is impossible. Some of us here in this room have not seen our family for years.

Well, Jesus knew what it's like to be homesick. He left heaven in the presence of his Father to come down to earth. Have you ever been abandoned?

Jesus has. He was left all alone on that cross, apart from his Father, separated from his friends and his family. Have you ever been rejected?

[16 : 57] Jesus has. The priests and leaders of that day, his own people, despised him. Have you ever been betrayed, stabbed in the back by a friend?

Jesus has. Judas, one of his closest friends, one of his disciples, betrayed him for a bag of money. His own disciple, Peter, denied that he knew him.

Have you ever felt pain? Jesus has. He was left hanging on that cross to die. Have you ever lost someone you loved? Jesus has.

His cousin, John the Baptist, was murdered. His friend, Lazarus, died. We can go on and on. What are you going through right now?

I'm sure this year, 2021, has been a good year for some of us. But for others, I can imagine, 2021 has been a very tough year. In fact, it's probably been a tough year, a tough couple years for a lot of us.

[17 : 58] some of us have experienced loneliness. We can't see our family because of COVID. Some of us are experiencing stress, emotional stress, or financial challenges, family tension, health issues.

Some of us have lost a loved one this year. But Jesus Christ is not the far-removed CEO who is up in the clouds, in his ivory tower, unaware of what's happening at the ground level.

He knows what it's like to be in the trenches because he was born in the trenches and he lived all his life in the trenches. He was rejected and despised all his life. Even before he was born, as Chris reminded us last Sunday, his parents, Mary and Joseph, couldn't even find a place to birth him in the inn.

And during his life, he never, he never had a place that he called home. He roamed from town to town teaching and preaching, but he also experienced the same emotional highs and lows that we face.

But because he's fully God and fully man, two and both, both fully God and fully man, he can look at all of us, he can look into our hearts and say, I understand what you're going through right now because I've experienced the exact same thing.

[19 : 20] He knows what it's like to feel pain and suffering, stress and anxiety. He was also tempted like we are. The most widely quoted passage where our Lord was tempted is from Matthew 4 where the devil tempted Jesus in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights.

But if Jesus truly was fully man as the Bible says he is and as we believe he is, I can imagine he was tempted in many different ways. Think about Jesus as a primary school student.

When I was in elementary school back in Canada, I remember in grade 7 we were asked to hand around our yearbooks for our classmates to sign and write comments and when I got my yearbook back I was horrified because a lot of the comments said, Oscar, you're really arrogant.

You show off too much. You brag about how good you are at blah, blah, blah, whatever. I'm a sinner. But think about Jesus. In Torah school, he could have recited the entire Torah word for word but he didn't.

He held back his great knowledge. He kept his mouth shut. He obeyed his father. Think about Jesus as a 20-something young adult. Longing to pursue a career and to hopefully have some sort of stability and to enjoy the pleasures of life for the next 50, 60 years.

[20 : 42] But instead, he obeyed his father. He pursued the life that he was called to pursue of ministry, of teaching and healing and that led him to his death on the cross.

And think about what Jesus went through the night he went to the cross. Actually, for this, we don't have to imagine. Scripture tells us. Luke 22 says that the night he was arrested, he went up to the Mount of Olives and he prayed this prayer.

Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done. And then the passage says that Jesus, being in agony, he prayed more earnestly and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground.

Jesus experienced significant stress, pressure, and anxiety knowing he was about to go to the cross. He could have wiped out the entire Roman army with a wave of his hand but he said, not my will, Father, but yours be done.

Now you may argue, well, Jesus never had to deal with screaming children or internet pornography, right? Well, so does he really know what it's like to feel temptation?

[22 : 04] He never sinned. Well, here's a helpful quote from C.S. Lewis to help us think through this. And C.S. Lewis writes, no man knows how bad he is until he has tried hard, very hard, to be good.

Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of the wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down.

A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness.

They live a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it.

And Christ, because he was the only man who never yielded to temptation is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means. The only complete realist.

[23 : 15] So no, Jesus didn't face screaming kids, nor was he tempted by internet porn. But at the root, he faced the same struggle for control, the same desire for pleasure that we face in a far greater way than we have ever had.

The only difference is that our Lord never gave in. He was given the same decision to sin or not to sin as we are given, but time and again, he never gave in.

He fought the temptation, which means he is the only person who perfectly understands what it's like to be tempted. Okay. Are you with me?

Someone over there is with me. Great. Okay. So, we've established that Jesus understands what it's like to face emotional highs and lows. He knows what it's like to face temptation, but he doesn't just understand and then leave us to our own devices to go figure it out.

He understands us, but he also comes towards us to comfort and heal us. He understands us after only a few months in ministry, Jesus was quickly becoming famous.

[24 : 32] He could have set up shop anywhere in Israel and kicked his feet up and many would have come to him daily, but he didn't do that. He went out actively and intentionally. He went out into the wilderness to teach, preach, heal.

He went into the city of Jerusalem to do the same. He met the woman at the well. He met with sinners. He met with tax collectors. Jesus, and today, Jesus is still at work calling you and I to follow him.

to trust him, be with him. He's calling your name and my name right now. He always moves towards us.

Now the question is, how are we responding? Are we moving back towards him? So therefore, a lot of therefore's, so therefore, since Jesus is the great high priest who perfectly understands us, verse 16, let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and grace in our time of need.

And this is where we're landing. Now draw near suggests that we have to be active and intentional with our walk with God. We've been saying that Jesus always moves towards us.

[25 : 48] He's active and intentional towards us. He moves towards people when he preached, taught, and healed. And today, he is coming to us and asking us to lay our burdens on him, to ask for forgiveness in his name.

So how are we responding? It's nice to hear a sermon that he is a great high priest and that he understands us, but what are we doing about it? We have to be active and intentional in our relationship with him.

And we can draw near to his throne because it's a throne of grace, as our passage says. It's not a throne of judgment. He doesn't summon us to his throne room to be punished for the sake of punishment or to satisfy his wrath.

It isn't a throne of fear. He doesn't demand that we come before him so he can yell and scream at us to strike fear in our hearts to satisfy his ego. It's a throne of grace because one of the fundamentally deepest desires of Jesus is for us to come to him with all that we have, all our messiness, all our ugliness, just as we are, all our imperfections, so that he can lavish his wonderful love and grace upon us.

Now, mercy and grace are a little bit different. So this is a bit technical. So mercy is not receiving what we deserve while grace is receiving what we don't deserve.

[27 : 26] Let me repeat that. Mercy is not receiving what we deserve and grace is receiving what we don't deserve. Mercy is when we deserve punishment for our actions.

We are all sinners. We all fall very short of the mark. But because Jesus paid the price as our great high priest on the cross and if our faith and hope and lives are in him, that punishment is already on him and not on us.

We deserve death but Christ died in our place. Mercy is not receiving what we deserve. Now, grace is slightly different. Grace is receiving something we don't deserve.

For example, hypothetically, say I yell or I snap at my wife Celeste. Hypothetically, of course, I never would do that. Just kidding. Obviously, that's a joke.

And after snapping at her, I ask for her forgiveness. Now, I probably deserve her snapping back at me or worse, the silent treatment. We all know how bad that is. But instead, she says, it's okay.

[28 : 34] I forgive you. She gives me a big hug. Grace is receiving what we don't deserve. So what does it look like to draw near to his throne of grace?

Well, it's simple, actually. We have to come to him in prayer, humbly, honestly, and often.

Humbly because we realize that we desperately need him. We can do nothing without him. He is our sustenance. He is our daily bread. Honestly, because we lay everything at his feet.

All of our worries and anxiety, all our fears, all our goals, all our sin and temptations. We leave nothing. He knows everything already, but he wants us to come to him and to confess everything, to give everything to him.

And often, because we need him every day, every single day, we need him. Let me close by reading this excerpt from a sermon by Pastor James Allen Francis from the 1920s as he describes Jesus.

[29 : 44] Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village.

He worked in a carpenter shop until he was 30. And for three years, he was an itinerant preacher. He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office.

He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. Never traveled 200 miles from the place he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompanies greatness.

He had no credentials but himself. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him.

He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioner's gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth, his coat.

[30 : 50] When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen long centuries have come and gone, and today, he is the centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built, all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life, the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. Say amen to that. Amen. Amen. So brothers and sisters, I'm closing here. As we look to Christmas, as we look to the day that God became flesh and moved into our neighborhood, as we prepare our hearts to celebrate the day that our Lord Jesus was born, let's meditate on this incredible reality that the sovereign God of all creation, of the universe, took on our humanity.

He became one of us. Because of that, He understands us. He knows us. He understands. He experienced all our pain, all our suffering, all our stress and anxiety, all our temptation.

He's the great high priest who understands what it's like to live in our broken world. And He is the God who constantly moves towards us.

[32 : 34] Let's respond today and move towards Him. Let's lay at Jesus' feet everything. All our stress, all our hopes and fears, all our anxieties, all our sin, and all our temptation.

We're going to shortly enter into a time of communion. A communion is a celebration.

We're going to celebrate this incredible reality that although Jesus was very comfortable in heaven with His Father, He didn't have to come to earth, but He did. He took on flesh.

The Word became flesh and He came into this world and He died for our sins. We want to celebrate that today because that is glory for us. But first, the Bible also says that communion is a time for us to search our hearts.

You know, none of us are perfect. All of us are sinners. Church is not a place for perfect people. Jesus asks us to come to Him not because we're perfect, because we're imperfect.

[33 : 49] Jesus is for those who are imperfect, but in need of His grace and His mercy. So spend some time in prayer in the next few minutes, asking God to reveal the hardest in your heart, whatever it is that you're going through, and at the same time, let's also spend some time laying our burdens on Him.

All the stuff that we've been worrying about, whether it's school, our education, money, all our frustration with travel and other things, whatever it is, let's lay it upon Him right now.