

The Pity of Our Savior

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[0 : 00] Hebrews 4.12, for the Word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions.

And then our focus will be these two verses, next two verses, Seeing then that 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 was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Hmm. Something sticky on my paper. Must have been eating a chocolate bar or something when I was studying.

Oh, Sherry's here. Well, I goofed on that, didn't I? That was probably something else. All right, verse 16.

Let us therefore... It's a shameful break in the continuity of the passage, I'm sorry. Let us therefore... Therefore, based upon all that we've just read...

[1 : 38] Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. All right? Now, again, verses 14 and 15 will be our focus tonight.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest. And then, of course, verse 15, that my favorite part, do not have a high priest who does not sympathize.

Sympathize with our weaknesses and so forth. All right? Two wonderful verses. Now, before I get to the sermon, I want you to turn to another passage of Scripture.

In Psalm 103. Turn to Psalm 103 and verse 13. Psalm 103, verse 13.

And I shall endeavor to put these two passages together. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him.

[2 : 46] Not fear him in the sense of quaking at his presence or fearing in the sense of hiding and cowering. But fear him in the sense of loving respect for him.

Because you know him. He is your father. So, again, so the Lord pities those who fear him. For he knows our frame.

He knows what we consist of. He remembers that we are dust. I love that passage of Scripture.

Now, these two, in my opinion, the subject goes together.

What we're going to be talking about tonight. But I want you to consider, first of all, that, of course, David, King David, the author of this psalm. King David had a kind of life every one of us can relate to.

I mean, he really did. Now, not any of us probably could relate to what it would be like to be a king, of course. And I doubt any of us here, though I'm sure, I know we have some who've been in the military.

[3 : 56] I don't think any of us could really grasp what it would be like to be a military leader. A great conqueror in that sense.

But we can relate to David in that he was just a regular guy. And he, regardless of whether you consider yourself rich or poor, David has been rich and poor.

And you might consider, whether you consider yourself kind of an influential kind of person. Or whether you just would consider yourself kind of insignificant. David has experienced both those things.

Whether you consider yourself a person of authority or great influence. Or a person of little authority or little influence.

Whatever. No matter who you are, what you are. No matter, you can relate in some way to David. And we can identify with David.

[5 : 01] David knew poverty as well as wealth. He knew honor as well as weakness. He knew reproach. He knew health as well as weakness and all these things. And David also knew trials and temptations.

And David also knew moral failure. He knew sin. Because he had committed. He had miserably failed. And someone has said that David is qualified and able to speak to our heart of hearts. When we read the Psalms. When we read some of what he wrote there. And where he agonizes and weeps. And he repents. And he's broken. And so forth.

David is qualified and able to speak to our heart of hearts. Because David was tutored in the best of all schools. What school would that be?

The school of personal experience. And so have we. Now, why do I mention David here in this sermon? Especially since David is certainly not the focus here in Hebrews chapter 4.

[6 : 05] Jesus is. But that's exactly my point. Because I want to tell you about another person. Who is infinitely more qualified than David was and is through scripture.

To speak to our heart of hearts. And more than that. About someone who has absolute possession of our heart of hearts. And I want us to then to consider in these two verses.

The one who understands everything you and I will ever, ever experience in this life. And who would that be? It would be Jesus.

Now, David was a type of Jesus. David in the Old Testament was in. We could relate to him.

And Jesus in the New Testament can relate to us. Not in that he has sinned or failed. But in that he has experienced everything that we will ever experience in life.

[7 : 09] And more. Okay. Now, I think that helps introduce the particular subject tonight. And if you remember, and if you've been here the last couple of Sundays.

Then you know that we've been looking at certain realities for the believer. Certain realities for the believer that for us represent the very basis for our coming boldly.

Which is what the last verse in this text is all about. We can see these, we've been seeing these realities that represent again for us the basis for our coming boldly.

Or confidently to God's throne of grace. Essentially, these realities that we've been looking at. And we're going to look again tonight. These realities really compel us to run to God's throne of grace to receive the mercy that we need.

Now, we've considered two of these realities. The first one was the probing of Scripture. The very nature of Scripture. That it probes us. It cuts us. It reveals. And because of the nature of Scripture.

[8 : 20] The probing of Scripture. We are compelled to run to God's throne of grace. Because of what Scripture reveals in us. We also consider the presence of sin.

Certainly, something that compels us to run to God. To run to His throne of grace. That was in verse 13. And now, we should come, can come, must come.

Now, it's the only smart thing to do. To come confidently to God's throne of grace. Because someone is there who understands us.

Right? He understands us. Someone is there at the throne of grace who knows what we are experiencing.

And so, this third reality, I would name it this way. The pity of the Savior. The probing of Scripture. The presence of sin. The pity of the Savior.

[9 : 20] And I see here in verses 14 and 15, several truths about Jesus. About who He is. About what He has done and continues to do.

That when you put them together, give us great confidence. That at any time and for any reason, we can come to the throne of grace and get the grace and mercy that we need.

These truths. In fact, there are six of them. So, let's get going on it. Okay. What are these truths? The first one. All about Jesus.

This is about Jesus. What are these truths about Jesus? First, His lofty priesthood. His high, lofty priesthood.

Verse 14. What does it say? It says, we have, rather, a great high priest. A great high priest. Now, we've covered some of this ground before, but we need to look at it again.

[10 : 21] It's interesting that throughout the book of Hebrews, and especially through better than half of it, the Word of God exalts the high priesthood of Jesus Christ.

He is our great high priest. In chapter 2, verse 17, for example, He is the merciful and faithful high priest. In chapter 3, verse 1, He is the apostle and high priest of our confession.

And here in chapter 4, we're looking at that, but you can also look at, read sometimes chapters 7 and 8 and 9, and woven throughout those chapters is this theme of the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, again, here in chapter 4, He's called what? The great high priest. And that's quite a title for Him. What does that mean? Well, you know, the point of it is this, that Jesus is the ultimate and final fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood.

The Old Testament priesthood has passed away because Jesus came and He fulfilled it. And He's the ultimate and final fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood.

[11 : 36] Certainly, it goes without saying, the high priesthood, which was something quite special. He's the fulfillment of it. Remember, the Old Testament priests were appointed by God to be the mediators between Himself and God's chosen people.

And only the high priest was qualified to offer the highest of the sacrifices under the Old Covenant. And that would be the sacrifice of atonement.

It would be offered on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. And only the high priest could take care of that function. And on that day, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, all the sins of the people were brought symbolically into the tabernacle, later the temple.

And they would be brought into that innermost place, the place only the high priest could go. And that was the place called the Holy of Holies.

All right? You're familiar with this. And there, the blood from the sacrifice was sprinkled on the mercy seat, that kind of lid over the Ark of the Covenant.

[12 : 50] Inside the Ark of the Covenant, among some other things, we had the tablets, the Ten Commandments. The mercy seat was on the top of it, and the high priest would take the blood and sprinkle it on the mercy seat, signifying the covering of all the broken laws of the people.

They'd broken the law, and the blood was to make atonement for their sins. And that worked for a year in the Old Economy, the Old Testament Covenant. That would go all right for a year, and God would forgive their sins for that year.

And then the same process was repeated the next year. Same time, same place, same channel. No, that's something else. They would have to do it every year, year after year, on Yom Kippur, on the Day of Atonement.

All right, now, to enter the Holy of Holies, the high priest had to pass through three areas. He had to pass through the outer court in the temple.

First the tabernacle, then later it was the temple. Through the outer court. So he took the blood, which was sacrificed outside the temple, okay?

[14 : 02] Just like Jesus was sacrificed outside. And so the blood, he'd take that blood in that laver, and he would pass through the outer court with the blood.

And then he would enter in through a curtain in the tabernacle, a door, I would suppose, later in the temple, into the holy place.

That was called the holy place. And there you had several pieces of very significant furniture and such, and the incense, altar of incense. The holy place. He would take the blood in there.

And then, finally, he would enter in through the thick veil into the holiest place, or the holy of holies. That would be the inner part. Only the high priest was allowed to go in there. And then, again, he would sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat. Now, our passage here, just in this verse 13, just this one passage, or 14, rather, is intended to bring all that imagery to the mind.

[15 : 09] Now, it wouldn't have that effect necessarily for us because we're not Jews. But to the Jewish reader, the initial readers of this, suddenly all that imagery would be there.

They could picture that. Not that they'd ever been there in the holy of holies or even in the holy place. Some of them have never been in the outer court. But they would picture this whole process. And so, what is this passage doing for us? I'm trying awful hard not to say Paul, what Paul is trying to tell us here. Anyway, what's the point here?

That this is pointing us to the fact that Jesus is the fulfillment, complete fulfillment, of the Old Testament priesthood. He is the completed, in fact, I would word it this way, the completed fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood.

Because not only is he the fulfillment of the office itself, so much so that it has passed away now. But he is also the fulfillment of the process, the work that they did, the service that they did once a year.

[16:14] And so, what the high priests before him did and had to do year after year after year, he came to do once. Once and it's done.

Once for all, once for all time. And no other priest, high priest, was like our great high priest. No other high priest did what our high priest did.

Alright, so, I have, here's the first point, the beginning of this. I have confidence when I come to the throne of God, the throne of his grace, because of Jesus and his lofty priesthood.

When I come to the throne of grace, he is there. My great high priest, representing me before God. That leads to the second truth about Jesus.

His lordly position. That's how I would name it. His lordly position. Verse 14. He's passed through the heavens.

[17:23] So, now, the word heavens here refers to the heaven of heavens. Really, we could translate passed ultimately into the very heaven of heavens.

In fact, it's the same word that describes the holy of holies. Naos. The holiest of holies. He's passed into the heavens of heavens.

That's the abode of God. That is the place where the throne of God is located. That's where Jesus has passed. So, you see, we could say that just like the Old Testament priests, Jesus, our great high priest, passed through three areas with the blood of the sacrifice.

Not the sacrifice of a lamb, but his own blood. He passed through three areas with his own blood.

He passed through the first heaven. That would be our atmosphere. He passed through the second heaven. That would be outer space.

And then he took the blood into the third heaven. The Bible speaks of the third heaven. That's the abode of God. Jesus came in with the blood of the sacrifice for your atonement, my atonement, into the very presence, into the very throne room of God, into the holiest of holies.

[18:36] And so the Old Testament priest went into the holy of holies where the glory of God dwelt. But Jesus went in where God himself dwelt, into the holiest of holies.

And the Old Testament sacrifice had to be repeated every year. Why? Because the high priest was not perfect. He could not be, even though he went through quite a rigorous system of purification. But he was not perfect. So, you know, he had to repeat this every year. And also because the sacrifice itself was not perfect. Even though, again, they went through quite an ordeal, examining and nitpicking the sacrificial lamb so that they would find one that was spotless and perfect, at least as best they could.

But it still was not perfect. And so the Old Testament sacrifice had to be repeated every year because the priest is not perfect. The sacrifice is not perfect. But Jesus was perfect.

Perfect in his priesthood. Perfect as a sacrifice. Perfect sacrifice. And so he offered it once for all time. And then the Old Testament priest would have to go in to the holy of holies and sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat.

[19:55] And then he'd have to get out of there. He couldn't remain. He couldn't stay. He couldn't tarry. He couldn't just sit down and spend a little time in there and hang out. He had to get out of the holy of holies because that was required.

But what about Jesus, our great high priest? When he passed into the third heaven, the holiest of holies, he did not have to leave when he presented the blood. He stayed there.

In fact, the Bible says in Hebrews 1, 3, When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down. Sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

The holiest of holies. The holiest of holies. That's his lordly position right now. At the right hand of the throne of God in the holiest of holies. Now we don't see him now, do we?

I mean, you can't look up there and see. It's veiled from our eyes. He's in the holiest of holies and yet we cannot see him. And that's kind of interesting.

[20:53] There's a parallel for that in the Old Testament system because when the Old Testament priest, high priest, would take the blood into the holy place, that's the area outside of the holy of holies, when he took it into the holy place and then ultimately into the holiest of holies, all other people had to remain in the outer court.

No one could go into the holy place other than priests and the high priest. And then the priests would go into the holy place to perform their duties and they did that kind of by rotation.

Remember Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist? He had his turn in the holy place but he was the only one allowed in there. All the people had to wait outside, remember?

And then they were waiting to find out what happened. Remember, and he came out and he was dumb. He couldn't speak because he doubted God. So no one else can go into the holy place and they couldn't even look in there.

In fact, by law, as the high priest would enter into the holy place and he would draw back the curtain in the tabernacle, the people were not allowed to look in. Even into the holy place.

[22 : 01] Much less the holy of holies. And no one but no one could go in there but the high priest. Or even look in there. That's just the way it was.

And so it's the same here for us now. We have our great high priest who when he offered the sacrifice of his own blood for our sin, he sat down at the right hand of God in the holiest of holies. And we can't see him now. And no one is able to look into the holiest of holies. And no living person has ever been allowed to except to. Think you can name who they were?

Stephen was one of them. Remember Stephen in Acts chapter 7, 55. He, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. He was allowed to look into the very holiest of holies and see Jesus there. Not seated then but standing, I think of course in his honor. Paul also was allowed.

[23 : 07] Though he doesn't give us any information about it. He says in 2 Corinthians 12, 2 and 4 and just piece some of that together, Paul was caught up into the what?

Third heaven. Into the third heaven. That's the holiest of holies. And he was caught up into, he called it paradise, and heard inexpressible words.

That is, he heard things he couldn't repeat. Not lawful, he says. Not lawful for a man to utter. Not lawful for a man to speak. And he never spoke about it.

So two people, as far as I know, no others in Scripture were allowed, while they were still living, to look into, peer into, to have the veil pulled back just a little from the holiest of holies other than Stephen and Paul.

Well, we can't look there now. But that's where our great high priest is. In his lofty position. His lordly position, rather. Seated at the right hand, right hand of the throne of God.

[24 : 10] And by the way, when he got there, God said, I'm satisfied. I'm satisfied. I'm satisfied with what you've accomplished. He said, in effect, you have accomplished atonement for all those who come to you by faith in what you've accomplished on the cross.

Number three, his life-saving person. His life-saving person. What is the name of this great high priest?

It's not just speculation on our part. I mean, it's right there in the text. Verse 14, Jesus, the Son of God. We're not just assuming that the great high priest is Jesus.

We know it because the Bible tells us so. Jesus, the Son of God. And really, this title, name and title, gives us some pretty significant information about our great high priest.

We glean that from this name. In the first place, it tells us who he is. He's not Buddha. Buddha is not our great high priest. He's not Muhammad.

[25 : 22] Muhammad is not our great high priest or Confucius or Hare Krishna or, you know, infinite number. He's not the Mormon god Moroni. It's Jesus.

He's our great high priest and only him. He's not representative. That's just not just a representative name for a collection of others who are serving in the same capacity.

It just depends on who you want to believe in. It's Jesus. That's a very definite identification. There's only one person it could mean and that's Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem and lived in Nazareth and preached and performed miracles and went to the cross and died upon the cross. It's that same Jesus. He is our great high priest.

All right, everybody here knew that. It also tells us what his relationship is to God the Father. He's the Son of God and that tells us a number of things but most importantly, it tells us that he's God.

[26 : 24] His deity. He's God of very God. He's the Son of God. God of God. This also tells us what he has accomplished for us. The name Jesus tells us that because of the meaning of the name Jesus.

We've heard this over and over again. It's very clear. The name Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the name Joshua in the Old Testament.

Both names mean the same thing. In the Hebrew, in the Greek, they mean Yahweh is salvation. Is salvation. Yahweh is salvation.

Matthew 1.21. The angel said, you shall call his name Jesus. Why? Because he shall save his people from their sins. That's what the name means. Yahweh is salvation.

And so you see, the Old Testament priest would enter the Holy of Holies with the blood of the sacrifice but it was not his own blood because his own blood was tainted and it was polluted with sin.

[27 : 25] But with Jesus, the high priest, was also the sacrifice that made atonement. So he is, he is our salvation because he made the atonement himself.

He was the sacrifice. Hebrews 9.12. Not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood he entered the most holy place once for all.

That's, again, not talking about the physical tabernacle or temple. Talking about the holiest of holies. He entered into the most holy place. The holiest of holies once for all having obtained eternal redemption for if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

marvelous passage. So his lofty priesthood his lordly position his life-saving person he's Jesus Yahweh is salvation and then fourth his lavish provision his lavish provision which is our salvation he has lavishly poured out his love poured out salvation upon us undeserving as we are and always will be he lavished it upon us let's put this together seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens Jesus the Son of God and then then we have this phrase let us hold fast our confession now what does that last phrase mean?

well Jesus is the subject here in this verse right? yes Jesus is our great high priest right? yes he is he sacrificed himself for us for our sin right?

[29 : 34] alright right and he with his own blood satisfied God's holy judgment upon us for our sin Jesus did that right?

yes and our faith in Jesus our faith in him that is trusting in who he is trusting in what he has done for us and more importantly resting completely resting with confidence and security resting in his lavish provision of salvation our faith in Jesus is our confession that's our confession right?

who he is what he has done his lavish salvation upon us and we you know we have that as a as a gift of his grace our faith in Jesus is our confession now if that's right then we should make every single day of our lives a demonstration to the world that our confession is true that our confession is true it's a true confession of faith that's what it means to let us hold fast our confession see don't don't be confused we're not talking about holding fast to Jesus with the idea that we might be able might somehow lose him you see the root the very root of our confession the very foundation of it is faith certainly but the fruit of our confession is obedience a life of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ to Jesus as Lord and so in this passage we're not talking about the root of our confession our faith because our faith is not us holding on to Jesus Jesus holds on to us so it's not the root of our confession the passage is talking about the fruit the very fruit of our confession our obedience to the Lord of Jesus Christ let us hold fast to that obedience as a response to what Jesus has lavished upon us our salvation that's our outward demonstration that our confession is true otherwise why should anybody believe you anybody believe us why should they if our confession is not an outward demonstration that it's true it's true that we are true believers you see Jesus is Lord and we are his possession and through and we are his possession rather through his lavish provision of salvation we let's hold on to that through a demonstration of what that means in our lives alright next

I have a great confidence in coming to God's throne of grace for grace and mercy because number five his loving pity now don't take pity in the maybe the normal usage of the word not pitying pitying us like you poor creature look at you but he does have pity for it and this is my favorite part of the passage verse 15 for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize I like the King James actually here who's not touched by the feeling of our infirmity and that's really what it means here but the new King James has it cannot sympathize with our weaknesses but was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin now what does it mean in all points tempted as we are was Jesus tempted to use illegal drugs

[33 : 37] I really doubt it oh some have had this conjecture that the resurrection was hallucination because Jesus and all of his disciples were eating these mushrooms or something like that ridiculous I don't think Jesus was ever tempted to use illegal drugs was Jesus tempted to break the

speed limit laws I guess they might have had some in those days you know you can only ride a donkey just so fast I don't know was Jesus tempted to cheat on his income tax returns well Jesus did have something to say about paying taxes rendered to Caesar what is Caesar's and I think possibly we could consider conceive of the fact that he could have been tempted to withhold money that was to be paid in taxes yet we know he didn't because he did pay the taxes was Jesus tempted say to go to pornographic websites well no might have been tempted in other forms of pornography of his day was Jesus tempted to gamble away his money at the casino

I don't think so and see the point I'm making is this the idea is not specific temptations to specific sins that's not the idea from this passage the idea is that he experienced the full full weight of temptation the full weight of it the full brunt of it he he experienced the fullness of physical suffering too I think but also spiritual temptations Satan attacked Jesus at every level of his life in all the main categories of sin that were prevalent in his day and I think you could say that in a temporal sense he did certainly experience some of the same temptations that we experience temptations to lie to steal to temptations for pride and so forth same ones that we experience but to think further than that in the eternal sense because

Jesus is eternal and everything experienced was different than we experienced because he is an eternal being in the eternal sense because he was fully God and could not sin it's a subject for another day but I don't believe he could sin impeccability of Christ he could not sin because of that he experienced then the full weight of the trials and temptations that we experience the full weight of them in fact more than we would ever experience or could ever experience and therefore his understanding and here's the point that we need to get from this his understanding of the power of sin is very personal because he experienced it and not only that but it's perfect because he experienced the fullness of it something I would say to you we have never experienced not the full weight of temptation we never have and so no matter how powerful your temptation may be Jesus has experienced it no matter how strong your temptation it will never reach the power the strength of the temptation that Satan directed toward Jesus no matter what you suffer emotionally spiritually even physically it will never ever reach the intensity of Jesus suffering at any level see we have limits to what we can suffer we do we have limits to it Jesus had no limit we have limits I would suggest to you we have limits to what we can suffer physically and I would say to you because Jesus is God he did not have a limit in fact even to the point of his death he was the one that dismissed his spirit but we have a limit I mean we can just go so far and then we check out either we pass out or we die and we also certainly have limits to spiritual temptation

I mean you can just make it so far and then you're going to sin you're going to fail but Jesus had no such limit and since he had no limit then the power of it was greater than anything you and I could ever experience ever Jesus experienced that you see how he then can be a high priest that is touched with the feeling what it feels like to be tempted we have a great high priest his name is Jesus and he's experienced all the pain and hurt and temptation that we could ever experience and more much much more and listen here's the good news he's the one sitting at the right hand of the throne of God in glory interceding for us that's the whole point of this and so we can come to the throne we can confess our sins our hurts our struggles our failures we can do all of that and Jesus is touched by the feeling of them he's not dismissing them he's not saying well that's okay don't worry about it but he's touched by the feeling of them he sympathizes with our weaknesses he knows that we are just dust he knows that and so he says you've come to the right place here have grace and mercy so his lofty priesthood his lordly position his life saving person his lavish provision his loving pity and then one more we need to wrap this up his limitless perfection limitless perfection verse 15 for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses but was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin three words three words in the

[40 : 18] Greek text too three short little words packed full of meaning amazing words actually Jesus was tempted!

beyond what any of us have or will ever be tempted and he was tempted without sin without sin Jesus was completely apart from and separated from sin in fact the Greek phrase the two words that make up the without sin sin keying really on the word without when you put that with hamartia sin it means that he was absolutely free of sin the absolute absence of sin that would be we could translate it that way he was there was he was absolutely absent of all sin that's our Jesus alright now you knew that didn't you yet you also know that Jesus was mercifully tempted to sin by Satan but Jesus did not sin and so though he never sinned again he understands sin better than any one

of us he understands it so you want to talk to somebody who understands everything there is about sin you want to talk to somebody about that talk to Jesus he knows he knows sin he knows what you struggle with he knows the feeling of that he sympathizes with you you want to talk to somebody about your sin your struggle with sin your struggle with temptation talk to Jesus he knows he conquered it and you can talk to him about it where at his throne of grace and guess what you can expect to get there grace and mercy but you got to go there you can't hide it and harbor it and put it away and struggle with it and try to self-discipline yourself against it you need to take it to his throne there's mercy and grace there you and can't go you can't can't hear it!
you can't hear them! can't hear them!! you