

Second Sunday after Christmas – January 4, 2015
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Hebrews 2:10-18

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. 11) Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. 12) He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises." 13) And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." 14) Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- 15) and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16) For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17) For this reason 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. 18) Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Welcome to the family – sooner or later every new bride and groom is going to hear those words from one of their in-laws. It may happen that those same in-laws might be talking with one another about the new family member and make the comment – he's one of the family now. I suppose that comment could have both positive and negative implications depending on the tone and inflection of their voices. Hopefully, it would be statement of warm approval but I'm sure that there are those times sadly when the new relatives are less than enthusiastic about the new member of their family and those words are used to voice a rather reluctant tolerance – more so than a warm welcome.

Our text for today talks about family ties as it reminds us that we belong to the same family as the one who makes people holy. It reminds us that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. And when we pause to think about that we'll understand that this is nothing sort of divine love and grace.

By nature there's nothing about us which should have made Jesus want to have anything to do with us. Our sin and imperfection wasn't just an embarrassment to him. It was an insult against him. We regarded him as the enemy. We were happy to live as slaves to sin. We were destined to spend an eternity condemned to suffered the very torments of hell. You could say we were like inmates on death row – not exactly the ideal choice for a new member of the family. Although we did not deserve it, God had plans to bring us to glory. And his plan included allowing his Son to suffer in our place. And so in keeping with this plan our text speaks of Jesus as one of the family.

Theme: Jesus – He's One of the Family Now

1. He became one of us
2. With his life he made us holy
3. With his death he set us free from the fear of death

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. 11) Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

We just recently celebrated the birth of our brother, Jesus. The one who was born in We were reminded that the promised Savior was Immanuel – God with us. We often describe Jesus as the God-man to emphasize the fact that he is both true God and true man.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary to be our brother. And this is something that Jesus gladly did. He wasn't ashamed to become one of us even though. He looked forward to having us as members of his family as we can tell from the OT Scriptures in which the Lord spoke of his saving work on our behalf. We share the same human nature – though he was without sin and we share the same heavenly Father.

Our text refers to 3 separate OT passages in which the Lord speaks about his work on our behalf.

He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises. (cf. Psalm 22:22)

13) And again, "I will put my trust in him." (cf. Isaiah 8:17)

And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." (cf. Isaiah 8:18)

The first passage is from the 22nd Psalm – a Psalm in which the Lord even describes his suffering on our behalf with the cry: **My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?** Later the Psalm continues with a description of the Lord's sacrifice for us on the cross: (Psalms 22:7-8) **All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." (Psalms 22:18-19) They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. 19) But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me.**

Our Savior is so confident of his heavenly Father's assistance just a few verses later **He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises. (cf. Psalm 22:22)**

Surely that is what the Lord Jesus did when he assured his disciples that he and the Father are one and that the Father had placed all things under his feet and that whatever they asked the Father in his name it would be done for them.

Jesus lived a life of perfect praise for his heavenly Father in our place. Another evidence of that perfect life was Jesus perfect obedience to the will of his heavenly Father. Jesus relied completely on his heavenly Father and gladly carried out his will as our Savior. When Jesus became one of us – part of our family he became dependant upon God – that was part of his humiliation. His complete trust in the Lord was prophesied in the book of Isaiah and quoted in our text as evidence that Jesus used his life to make us holy: **13) And again, "I will put my trust in him." (cf. Isaiah 8:17) And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." (cf. Isaiah 8:18)** With his life he made us holy. He gladly introduces us as children of the heavenly Father.

God became one of us to bring us glory. But the plan that brought us to glory meant a path of suffering for Jesus – our brother. Our text explains that it was absolutely essential for Jesus to become one of us. **Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil... For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.**

A just and holy God did not bring men to heaven's glory by ignoring their sins but by dealing with them. He did this by sending his Son to become one of us. Jesus is the source of our salvation. He doesn't merely lead us

to salvation. He doesn't just blaze the trail to heaven so we can follow in his footsteps – he is the way. No one comes to the Father except through him.

Jesus' goal was to prepare salvation for us and this he did through his suffering. Without his suffering and death no one would enter glory. All would remain hostage to the fear of death. However, by becoming one of the family Jesus was able to accomplish much for us. First, he was able to render Satan powerless. We no longer have fear Satan's accusations or threats. Eternal death has been replaced with eternal glory by our Savior.

What else did Jesus accomplish by joining himself to our family? Listen as our text explains more: **For this reason 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.**

It is only in the book of Hebrews that Jesus is referred to as our high priest but it's a fitting description. A priest served God for the people and that is what Jesus did offering the perfect sacrifice of atonement. The word atonement was a familiar OT word. On the great day of Atonement the priest would enter the inner part of the temple to sprinkle the blood of animals on the cover of the ark of the Tabernacle. The sprinkling of blood symbolized the removal of sin and peace with God.

The blood Jesus sprinkled to set us at peace with God – at one with God wasn't just symbolic. It was his own holy and precious blood powerful enough to remove sin's deepest stain and to satisfy God's wrath once and for all.

Our text closes with one more blessing which is ours because of the fact that Jesus became our brother, **Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are tempted but he was without sin. His temptations came from within – from the devil and from those in the world. Because he was sinless his own flesh wasn't a source of temptation like ours is. But the point is this he suffered on those temptations. He struggled with them. He prayed for help to resist them – just think of the agony Jesus displayed in the Garden of Gethsemane as he wrestled with God in prayer. And because Jesus is familiar with temptation he is able to help us whenever we face temptation.

Our text pictures Jesus as a loving big brother. Perhaps if we think of what big brothers sometimes do we'll have a better appreciation for what it means for us that Jesus is part of our family. I surely wasn't the perfect big brother but I think that my younger siblings have an appreciation for some of the things I was able to do for them. As the oldest in the family I often was responsible for taking care of them, for helping them with various tasks. Sometimes they could learn from my mistakes and avoid trouble. Other times I was called upon to protect them when they did something foolish. Sometimes I needed to defend them when they were falsely accused of doing something wrong. When they faced questions and challenges in their life – they would come to me and ask how I handled those situations. At times I recall being willing to give up something so that they could have something special. Now keep in mind that the reason I'm sharing these thoughts is so that we can see the practical aspect of having Jesus as our perfect big brother. The point is that a big brother often is there to help his younger brothers and sisters – and that what having Jesus as a member of the family is all about – he isn't just there often – he's always there to help us out. You can count on him to be there for you always and that's a comfort no matter what difficulty in life confronts or challenges us.

Thank God for sending Jesus to become one of the family. Welcome him in faith and gladly enjoy the wonderful blessings and privileges he gives to you. Amen.