



"Jesus: Source of Salvation"

Sermon - Steve Stanis

30 July 2023

Hebrews 4:14 - 5:10

Psalm 110:1-7

Hebrews is teaching us to elevate Jesus. Today I want to encourage us to elevate Jesus. To elevate Jesus, he must increase and we must decrease.

This is true humility. To elevate Jesus, Christ must be seen in us. To elevate Jesus is actually quite freeing; we are free to be the people God created us to be.

The well-known band U2 sang a song titled, *Elevation* - from Bono these words...

*Love... Lift me up out of these blues
Won't you tell me something true?
I believe in you.*

Only when we understand the work of our great High Priest, Jesus, can we elevate him, which frees us to love and serve together. Firstly, Hebrews teaches us the importance of not walking away from Jesus because Jesus is God speaking to us. Secondly, Jesus is God's promised, perfect King. Today's passage is teaching us that Jesus is the perfect priest.

Both Bible Readings today focus on the high priesthood of Jesus Christ and present him as the ultimate and perfect high priest who mediates between God and humanity.

In Hebrews 4:14-16, the author emphasises the sympathetic and compassionate nature of Jesus as the high priest. It claims that Jesus, being the Son of God, understands our

weaknesses and struggles because he himself experienced temptation and suffering during his earthly life. Therefore, we as believers, are encouraged to approach Jesus with confidence and find mercy and *grace in any time of need, in every moment of our lives.*

I wonder why it is that, when we are at our weakest (which is what temptation is) we hide from God? I think when we give in to temptation, we often experience a sense of shame and guilt. We feel unworthy in God's presence and maybe fearful of facing his disappointment. This can lead us to withdraw, or hide, thinking that we are not deserving of his love and forgiveness.

When we give in to temptation, we are at our most vulnerable. When we are vulnerable, our walls naturally go up as we self-preserve. This closing in and hiding the truth can distance us from God. Our self-talk makes us think God is not interested in us when we are struggling. This passage from Hebrews reframes our thinking; approach Jesus with confidence and find mercy and grace in any time of need.

Sometimes our perception of God's character can influence how we approach him. If we view God as a harsh judge, or someone who is quick to condemn, it follows that we would hesitate to come to him when we are feeling weak or tempted. This misconception can lead us to hide instead of seeking him. Finally, self-reliance can lead us to believe we need to fix our problems... sort ourselves out... before we can approach God. These verses from Hebrews encourage us not to distance ourselves but to acknowledge our need for his grace and love. When we do this, we elevate Jesus.

The truth of verses 14-15 is that God loves us in our weakness. His grace is sufficient for us. He is compassionate and understanding. He has given us the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts as we grow to be more like him.

Hebrews 5:1-4 explains the qualifications and duties of a high priest according to Jewish tradition. The author acknowledges the significance of this role but also points out its limitations and imperfections.

Hebrews 5: 5-10 then introduces Jesus as the high priest in the order of Melchizedek, a King and a priest from the Old Testament. The author presents Jesus as the perfect fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies and God's ultimate plan for salvation. Jesus did not appoint himself as a high priest but was chosen by God, the Father, who declared him as the Son and the eternal priest. The author quotes directly from the Messianic Psalm 110, to give this point authority. The author is emphasising the eternal nature of Jesus' appointment as high priest as divine.

The concept of the order of Melchizedek is further developed in verses 5-10, where the author highlights the superiority of Jesus' priesthood. The author explains that Jesus, as the Son of God, is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek, surpassing the limitations and imperfections of the tradition Levitical priesthood.

In Psalm 110, several verses express the exalted status and authority of the Messiah. Verse 1 says,

*Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.*

We read of the elevated position God the Father gives to the Messiah. The author of Hebrews draws on the language and themes of Psalm 110 to present Jesus as the exalted and eternal high priest who is seated at the right hand of God. These verses in Hebrews confirm Jesus' appointment by God, his eternal priesthood, and his victory over his enemies, all aligning with the ideas presented in Psalm 110.

Verses 7-10 speak of Jesus' obedience and suffering, explaining that he learned obedience through his suffering and becoming the source of eternal salvation for all who follow him. As the perfect high priest, his sacrifice is once for all, offering eternal redemption to all who turn to him.

Hebrews 4:14-5:10 provides profound insights into the high priesthood of Jesus Christ and its implications for our lives as believers. Let's explore the key teachings in these verses with four relevant applications for us today:

1) Confidence in approaching God (V14-16)

The passage encourages us to approach God with confidence. Confidence is when we implicitly trust that he is explicitly doing his work in and through us, in every way, always! As I have said, we are reminded that Jesus, our perfect high priest, understands our weaknesses and struggles because he himself experienced temptation and suffering during his earthly life. As the Son of God, Jesus intimately knows the human condition and can empathise with our challenges. This understanding should embolden us to come before God with confidence, knowing that we will find mercy and grace in our time of need.

The invitation to approach God with confidence is an invitation to intimacy. It assures us that we have a compassionate high priest who is ready to receive us with open arms. In our moments of weakness, rather than hiding or withdrawing, we are called to draw near to God, knowing that he welcomes us with love, understanding and the desire to extend his grace to us.

2) Comfort found in Jesus' humanity (V1-4)

The fact that Jesus, the Son of God, experienced suffering and temptation during his earthly life makes him relatable and approachable to us. He understands our human struggles because he lived through them himself. This truth offers us comfort and reassurance in times of hardship, trials, and temptations.

When we face challenges or find ourselves in difficult circumstances, we can take comfort in the fact that Jesus walked this earth and endured similar experiences. He understands our pain, our doubts, our fears, and our weaknesses. We can approach him with confidence, knowing that he not only sympathises with us, but can provide us with guidance, strength and support we need to navigate through life's difficulties. To have confidence and comfort in God is to elevate Jesus.

3) Confess or Completely Embracing Jesus high priesthood (V5-7)

This passage from Hebrews presents Jesus as the ultimate high priest who offered himself completely for our sake. Unlike the Levitical priesthood that was limited and imperfect, Jesus' priesthood is perfect,

eternal and effective. His sacrifice on the cross once and for all brings us into relationship with God by reconciling our broken relationship with him.

Embracing Jesus' high priesthood means recognising and accepting the significance of his selfless act. He opened the way to experience the fullness of God's love and mercy. It means acknowledging that our salvation and access to God's presence are solely through Jesus. We no longer need to rely on earthly priests or human rituals to approach God. Jesus is our mediator, intercessor and advocate before the Father. Through him, we experience forgiveness, restoration, and the fullness of God's love and grace.

Elevating Jesus' priesthood also implies living in response to his sacrifice. It involves surrendering our lives to him, aligning our will with his, and allowing his transformative power to work within us. We are called to live as a holy priesthood, offering our lives as living sacrifices, and participating in his redemptive mission in the world. This is to elevate Jesus and it is a daily decision. Humble yourself daily, that your life might reflect Christ.

4) Cultivate compassion through suffering (V8-10)

Hebrews 5:8 highlights that Jesus learnt obedience from what he suffered. This verse acknowledges the reality that suffering is a part of our human existence. While we do not seek suffering, we recognise that it is often unavoidable in a fallen world.

However, the passage encourages us to view suffering from a different perspective. It challenges us to consider how suffering can shape and refine our faith. Through the trials we face, we have an opportunity to learn perseverance, humility and greater dependence on God. Suffering can deepen our trust in him, strengthen our character and conform us more closely to the image of Christ.

Moreover, suffering can cultivate empathy and compassion within us. As we experience our own pain and struggles, we become more understanding and accepting of the challenges others face. It opens our hearts to extend support, comfort, and encouragement to those in need.

Ultimately, suffering can draw us closer to God. It can strip away the superficial and worldly attachments that distract us from what is truly important. In our suffering, we may find ourselves seeking God more earnestly, relying on his strength, and discovering his plan and purpose for our lives. Suffering can serve as a catalyst for spiritual growth, leading us to a deeper relationship with God and a greater understanding of His good, perfect and pleasing will for us.

- i) Will you let it grow your faith stronger as you learn perseverance, humility and rely on God?

As your faith grows deeper, he transforms your character to be more like him.

- ii) Will you develop empathy and compassion, showing more understanding and acceptance of the struggles of others and, so, allow space to offer support, comfort and encouragement to others?

iii) Will suffering draw you back to what is important in life? Instead of focusing on things of this world, will you let God work through your suffering to transform your thoughts, perspectives, and worldview to align with his truth? Romans 2:2 promises that we will know God's good, perfect, and pleasing will. Can suffering draw you back to God?

The next verses of chapter 5 challenge the readers to stay faithful to Jesus through spiritual maturity; Trevor will be speaking on this next week.

In conclusion, today's passage from Hebrews invites us to approach God with confidence, find comfort in Jesus' humanity, embrace his role as the perfect high priest and learn from suffering. These teachings remind us of the depth of God's love and the redemptive work accomplished by Jesus. As we ponder these truths and apply them to our lives, let us elevate Jesus.

Let me pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus, our great high priest. Help us to daily elevate Jesus so that Christ might shine from us. Transform us, through your Holy Spirit, so that others might be encouraged to also trust, love and obey him. In his name we pray, Amen.