



The Letter to the Hebrews

Sermon-Based Study Guide
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Sermon Title: Soaring Heights, Surprising Depths

Sermon Text: Hebrews 2.5-9

Related Texts: Psalm 8

I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

Have you ever watched a TV crime show in which the malicious criminal gets away with a heinous crime such as murder (or perhaps in real life you have seen this)? What has your reaction been to such injustice? What has caused you to wonder if God is really in control?

II. Introduction

The first chapter of Hebrews stressed Jesus' superiority to the prophets and the angels who, as God's servants, delivered the Law to Moses. Jesus, the Son, is eternal, seated in glory with the Father, he is over all things, and he is upholding all things. As such, we see the Son soaring in the heights of God's glory – soaring supreme and preeminent over the angels, prophets, and all of creation. In our passage this week, however, the author shifts the focus from the soaring heights to the surprising depths.

III. Study the Text –Read Hebrews 2.5-9

- 1) When we look at verses 5 through 8a we find the author expositing Psalm 8.4 - 6. This Psalm was generally interpreted as a description of human beings dwelling on earth, created by God. How are human beings described by the verses quoted here?
- 2) How significant is it that God is mindful of and cares for you? That you are a human being who is "slightly lower than the angels?"

Note: The phrase found at the end of verse 6 "the son of man" merits some attention. When the Psalm was written it most likely referred to "a son of man" meaning a human person. The Prophet Daniel (c. 605-530 B.C.) speaks God's word concerning the Messiah who is given the title "Son of Man." In Daniel the Son of Man is a powerful figure who brings the kingdom and justice of God into the world. Jesus referred to himself as the "Son of Man" as we have seen in the Gospel of Mark (2.28; 8.31; 8.38; 9.31; 13.26). In Hebrews 2.5-8, the writer of Hebrews focuses on human beings – a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor and given authority over all things on earth. This echoes the description found in Genesis 1.26.

- 3) Look at verse 8. God has entrusted the work of God's hands to human beings, subjecting all things on earth to human rule. However, the author continues by citing that "at present we do not see everything subject to him (human beings)." In what ways are things under the rule of humans? What is not presently under human subjection? Are there things to which human beings are under subjection (Genesis 3 comes to mind here)?

Note: If you are confused, you are not alone. This reference to Psalm 8 by the author of Hebrews is seen in a variety of ways by Biblical scholars. What is clear, however, is that the author sees 1) the significance and dignity of Human beings, created in the image of God and given a mandate to manage things on earth, and 2) a promise to rule with God over all things. However, as the author cites, we do not presently see the fullness of this promise – it remains yet to be seen.

- 4) In verse 9 the writer shifts the focus from human beings to Jesus. What is the writer's argument at this point? In other words, if we *at present* do not see human beings reigning or ruling over all things as God has promised, what (or who) do we see *at present* and what do we see *at present* in him?

Note: Now I think I may have confused you. The author shifts in verse 9 and applies Psalm 8 to Jesus in particular. Though we do not – at present - see human beings completely free from enslavement to sin and death and ruling over all things, we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honor – reigning over all things, the triumphant Son of God... right now.

- 5) The fulfillment of Psalm 8 is still future. What has Jesus done, according to verse 9, to ensure a future and an ultimate triumph over sin and death?

IV. Apply It – Reflect and Respond

- 1) How does the reference to Psalm 8 affect your understanding of how significant you are in God's purposes in this world?
- 2) How do you actually play a role in "ruling over" things on earth (see Genesis 1.26)? How is this accomplished in your work? In your relationships? In caring for your yard? In caring for your children/grandchildren? In other ways?
- 3) You are a human being – a creature who is designed to be "a little lower than the angels" (who dwell in God's presence and serve God's purposes). How do you think your worship of God makes you more fully human and more fully alive? How do you think following Jesus' example of humbling one's self and of sacrificial giving for the sake of others makes you more fully human?
- 4) Take some time to reflect on Philippians 2.5-11 where the Apostle Paul urges us to have the attitude of Jesus.

The Psalm speaks of humankind in general set in authority over the world, with "everything subjected to him." But, says Hebrews, this clearly hasn't happened yet. Humans are not ruling the world, bringing God's order and justice to bear on the whole of creation. Everything is still in a state of semi-chaos. How then can this Psalm be taken seriously? The answer is that it has happened – in the case of Jesus. He has gone ahead of the rest of us into God's future, the future in which order and justice – saving order and healing justice – will come to the world.

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