



Sermon-Based Study Guide  
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Good Shepherd Church - September 11, 2011

Sermon Title: Here's the Point

Sermon Text: Hebrews 8.1-6  
Related Texts: Matthew 11.28-30

## I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

This is the 10th anniversary of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks of September 11, 2001. Where were you and what were you doing when you first learned of this tragedy? What was one of your immediate reactions?

## II. Introduction

Chapters 7 through 10 (verse 18) of Hebrews contains the author's central theological point - Jesus is the superior high priest, the unique Son of God who mediates between God and humankind. Jesus is superior because he is fully God and fully human, because he gave himself as the sacrifice - once for all - for sins, and because he is alive forever in the inner sanctuary where God and creation intersect. In this week's passage the author states the point clearly - Jesus and the new covenant God has established through him is superior.

## III. Study the Text – Hebrews 8.1-6

- 1) As you look at verses 1 and 2, what do you see about Jesus' present position and activity? What contrast does the author present between the true tabernacle and the physical Tabernacle constructed and utilized during the exodus?
- 2) Verses 3 through 5 continue describing the contrasts between the Tabernacle that Moses was directed to build and the true tabernacle in heaven. Take a look at Exodus 25 to see the way Moses was instructed to do this. Notice verse 40 in particular. In what way was the Tabernacle merely a "copy" or "shadow" of what is in heaven? How is a "copy" or "shadow" (the Greek term is "hupodegmatai" which can mean "imitation, example, pattern, or copy) like the real thing and how is it unlike the real thing?

Note: To get some sense of this, imagine having seen a print or photo of a famous piece of art - the Mona Lisa or Michelangelo's sculpture of David. Then imagine what it would be like (or if you have seen something like this, what it is like) to see the original. If you have experienced this you know that seeing the real thing is wonderfully, amazingly better than looking at a print or copy or imitation.

- 3) In the context of Hebrews, the writer is contrasting relating to God through an older covenant that focused on the Tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem, with a newer covenant in which people relate to God through Jesus Christ. Verse 6 emphasizes the superiority of this newer covenant to the older. How is Jesus' ministry

as mediator of a new covenant superior to the old? How is the real better than the "copy"?

#### IV. Theological Reflection

Recently I have been impressed by the fact that we cannot understand the message of Jesus apart from understanding how God worked among the people of Israel. The Hebrews author does a great job of describing the "old" covenant established between God and Abraham. In Genesis 12 we find the initial covenant promise - Abraham will be the father of a multitude of descendants, he will have a land to dwell in, his family will be blessed by having a relationship with God, and through them all nations will be blessed with knowledge of God. This covenant promise extends through Abraham's descendants - Isaac and his son Jacob, who is later named Israel, and his 12 sons and their families. Despite hardship and eventual enslavement in Egypt, God remains faithful to the original promises, delivers Israel from Egypt, and ultimately settles them in the land of Canaan (present day Israel). Hebrews emphasizes how throughout the history of Israel the covenant promises of God are kept. However, as Hebrews points out in reference to Jeremiah 31.31-34, there is a newer and better way for people to experience God, have relationship with God, be blessed, and be a blessing to others - and it is through Jesus. Jesus is the real thing, not a mere example or imitation or pattern. Jesus is the real high priest and mediator between God and humankind. Jesus and the new covenant established through him is superior to the older covenant.

#### V. Apply It –Reflect and Respond

- 1) The attacks on the Trade Center and Pentagon and hijacking of Flight 93 over Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001 caused a wide range of reactions. We experienced grief, loss, anger, frustration, despising of evil, animosity, fear, and much more. How does relating to Jesus as your high priest who stands between you and God enable you to handle these kinds of feelings and reactions (not only around events like 9/11 but throughout life's hardships)?
- 2) In the context of an event like 9/11 as well as the everyday difficulties of life where do you turn for help, specifically for:
  - Security
  - Hope
  - Knowing how to respond to enemies
  - Dealing with the fears that arise?
- 3) Look at Matthew 11.28-30. How can you more fully accept Jesus' invitation to "come to me and find rest?" Might this mean making a conscious decision to trust in and follow him? Might this mean being willing to more fully entrust your fears, uncertainties, and need for hope, etc., to him? Might this mean a more full surrender to him as leader in your life?
- 4) Please pray for yourself and for the Good Shepherd congregation to place our trust in Jesus Christ above trust in our own strength, ability, and resources. Ask God to use us to be a blessing to others as we help to point them to Jesus.