

It Matters That Jesus Became One of Us

I think that many of us, when we think about Jesus, feel a kind of distance. Or you think “I have to keep Jesus at arms length; he is too different, too holy, too perfect”. Or, “I struggle with things that he wouldn’t understand.” Or “I live in the real world and Jesus is up there in heaven somewhere”. But this kind of thinking is destroyed by the message of this passage! Jesus became one of us. And that message could revolutionize your relationship with Jesus.

God did not just throw a book at us and say, “you guys better keep this or else!” He did not look at us and say, “you are such losers with all your sin and failure and weakness. He stooped down to our level. He sent Jesus to identify with us, to understand and sympathize with us. He came to represent us to God the Father, and he could only represent us as Someone like us in all things!

If you are going to relate to a child you have to get into their world. That is not always easy! I loved my kids but I did not love board games. I was very happy when my kids no longer wanted to play Candy Land, Chutes and Ladders or Monopoly! But I played a lot of board games in those days to step into their world.

Jesus became a man. He came to our level, not in our sin, but in every other way, he became just like us! None of us can ever truthfully say, “He doesn’t know; he doesn’t care’ he doesn’t understand”. No one can ever say “he hasn’t suffered, like me”! He knows you and he knows your trials, your suffering, your temptations and your weaknesses today. He knows how it feels to live your life.

It is that total identification with us, that makes him perfectly fit to be our Savior, to atone for our sins, to free us from our fears, and to help us overcome our temptations.

This passage answers a really big question: Why did God come to us, looking like a regular human being? Often in paintings of Jesus there is a halo drawn above his head. That is completely false.

When people saw Jesus, they saw nothing above his head, they saw nothing powerful or superhuman, about him. He wasn't shining or glowing, or semitransparent. He did not look super-human in any way! He looked just like us and was just like us..

This was a stumbling block to the Jews and to many people today. Many say they would believe in God, if God would only put himself on display in some spectacular, unmistakable way, like fireworks on the 4th of July. The Jews had a similar problem with Jesus! Why does Jesus LOOK less impressive than an angel? Or.. Why did he come as a human being instead of an angel? That is why the author HAS to argue that Jesus is superior to angels!

The author says Jesus is like us, because Jesus came to save people like us, not angels, not spiritual beings who have no bodies. Verse 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. He came to help people! And to help people he had to become one of us! Verse 14 "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things". Verse 17 "He had to be made like his brothers in every respect,..." Not only did he look like a normal human being...He experienced life JUST as we experience it. He knows exactly what it is like to be you! He completely understands every thought, every fear, every feeling you have at any time day or night. He felt what it is like to

wake up in the morning, what it is like to be tired. He felt the fluctuations of emotions and energy and all the human hungers and desires and needs that YOU feel. He experienced great joy, but he also knows what it is like to feel lonely, or rejected, or frustrated, or disappointed.

He knows how you feel when you have a huge pile of laundry in front of you; or an overwhelming task facing you at work. He came as a man to fully identify with us in our flesh and blood. And that connects him to you like a brother. He understands us, and is empathetic towards us, and is bonded to us, and he has that special interest in us, and affection toward us like a brother!

My brother and I grew up in the same home, shared the same room, went to the same schools, as twins, we experienced life together! And we both pastor churches! When he goes through something hard, I feel that with him. It that same way Jesus identifies with us!

He became like us in all ways but most profoundly he became like us in our suffering! Verse 10 “For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.”

Everything in the universe that exist now or ever has existed, was made by HIM, and exists FOR him! Every galaxy, every star, every person, every angel... YET..in order to bring us to glory, he came and lived as our brother. And... He did not live an insulated, protected life, free from pain. He felt the full force of the sorrow, the suffering, the disappointment, frustration of human existence. This is what makes him a perfect Savior for us! His suffering made him, perfectly suitable, or fully qualified, to be our High Priest and

Savior. If he had NOT suffered he would have been VERY DIFFERENT than us. But by suffering he became completely identified with us.

John Piper said, “One great aim of God in salvation is that he have a great unified family of children with Jesus Christ being essentially different from and yet deeply united to his other human brothers and sisters. But if all the brothers and sisters in a family have experienced suffering except one, the unity is jeopardized. And so for the sake of a common spirit of unity and sympathy and camaraderie, even in suffering, Christ takes on human nature and leads many sons to glory through suffering and death.”

His suffering culminated at the cross. It was through his suffering death at the cross that provided the means for us to become sons of God alongside him as our elder brother.

Sam Storms put it this way. “If Jesus was going to save us and reconcile us to God he had to live the life we should have lived and die the death we deserved to die. That is why he had to become human. Only a human being can live the sinless life that other humans failed to live. Only a human being can die in the place of other human beings the death they justly deserved to die. An angel couldn’t do this for us. No animal in creation could do this for us. We are humans and only one who is himself a human could serve as our substitute and succeed where we failed and discharge the debt that we owed.”

Our passage this morning emphasizes some of the major benefits that flow to us through his being made just like us.

*Verse 14 He shared in flesh and blood so “that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, “and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery”.”. This verse tells us Jesus became like us (he became flesh and blood) to defeat the devil and release us from fear of death.

The fear of death is one of the devil’s most powerful footholds. It is a way he holds us in his power. He is able to terrorize us with the thought of condemnation for our sins, with the fear of judgment. He is able to terrorize us with the thought of being ashamed to stand before God, with the uncertainty about life after death, with fears that arise from lack of assurance of our acceptance before a holy and righteous God.

Hebrews 9:27 “It is appointed to men to die once and after that comes judgment”. That sense of impending judgment brings fear or terror. The fear of having to give an account to God.

This verse says that many people live with a fear of death in the back of their minds all the time. I also know that some boast that death is a complete end of consciousness, so there is no God to fear; no God to whom I am accountable. They say, “Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!”. Some cope with death by simply refusing to talk about it or think about it. Or they brace themselves for death with a kind of unemotional stoicism.

I personally believe that these are all ways of coping with the underlying fears of death. These are ways of suppressing fear, by suppressing the truth they intuitively know, that we are accountable to our Creator God.

Verse 15 says that Jesus came to “deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery”. All fear is a kind of slavery! We are only free when when we are living completely without fear and anxiety. And fear of death can be a lifelong cloud hanging over us, sapping our joy, and optimism and hope.

But here...We see here the pity and compassion Jesus has for us, in wanting to free us from our fears. He saw people, like us, suffering under the tyranny of Satan, suffering under a fear of death and dying. And he came on a mission which cost him everything, to deliver us from the slavery of that fear.

He did that through his own death. IE That happened at the cross! Under the power of Satan, we were captive to our sins. Satan had the power to accuse and condemn and threaten us. And death for all was an open door to judgment and hell. But Christ came to destroyed these terrible and fearful realities through his death.

The only reason to fear death is unforgiven sin and the thought of standing before God in that unforgiven state, to face judgment and just punishment for our sins. Sam Storms said, “Satan’s power and authority and influence are strong only as long as the guilt of sin remains unforgiven.” But verse 17 says he made propitiation for the sins of his people.

Colossians 3:13-15 “He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, (and Satan himself) he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

He destroyed the devil's power of death, (as these verses reveal) by releasing us from the debt of our sins, from condemnation for our sins, which disarmed Satan, or took away his power to use death against us! So instead of death being an open door to judgment and hell, for the true believer in Christ, death is an open door to Paradise! Death is an open door to perfect health and happiness, to perfect communion with all believers, and to the presence of the Lord! Jesus told the dying thief on the cross, "Today you will be with me in Paradise!" Jesus said, "'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die'" (John 11:25-26).

1 Corinthians 15:54,55 says, When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" "Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" When you die, you will say, to this terrible thing we call death, "O Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?" Death is still an enemy! But it is a defeated enemy!

John Wesley once said about his Methodist believers, "Our people die happy". Or it may have been, "Our people die well".

We die happy because we go to death, NOT to experience the wrath and anger of God, but to experience the smile of God! We go to be received by our Father who has reconciled us to himself, and made us his own sons and daughters, and who will welcome us with joy and delight, as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride.

Those who belong to Jesus do not have to ignore death or pretend that death will never come. We do not have to shut our ears and close our eyes whenever the topic of death comes up. If we are confident in Christ, we need to have no fear of dying! Christ died to free you from that fear, along with all your other fears! We are free to live out our days in confidence, and joy and optimism knowing that to die is gain! To die is better! During Wesley's own last days, it was said that "He wore his belief like a badge of holy triumph". He repeatedly said, "The best of all, God is with us!".

But Jesus did not come only to deal with our fear of death. He came to stand by our side, here and now, today, as a merciful and faithful Helper! We have a life to live right now, problems to overcome, painful things to get through, we battle temptations to sin, we endure things that test our heart and character. And he is there to help us! I urge you to really believe that!! You can live life with Jesus now! You can live with confidence in his very real and present help!

Verse 17,"Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people". He was made like us so that he could relate to us in our weakness, so he could be merciful and faithful as our high priest.

The High Priest represented the people to God. He prayed for the people. He made sacrifices for the sins of the people. To be perfectly suited to those tasks the High Priest had to identify with the people, understand and sympathize with their weaknesses, otherwise he could not be a sympathetic advocate for the people.

Jesus did not come to make atonement for our sins in some mechanical, stoic, heartless way! He died for our sins with great sympathy and mercy for us! He laid down his life as an expression of faithful love for you! And his love and mercy did not stop at the cross! It is not like Jesus loved you once, a long time ago! He continues in that frame of heart towards you today!

We may picture him as being disgusted and frustrated with us, but Hebrews reveals him to us as so full of mercy and understanding of our weaknesses, that he is not ashamed to call us his brothers! He is ready to help us in our trials and temptations; not there to berate us but to mercifully help us!

Verse 18 “For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (or tested). Are you being tested today? Jesus is able to help us in our weaknesses, trials and temptations.

One of the best ways to deal with ANY temptation to sin, whether it be lust, or to complain, or fear, or anger, or gossip, is to cry out to Jesus to help you. “Jesus, come to my aid!”. If you hear your child cry out “Help me!”? You would stop whatever you were doing and run to them! Because you love them and you know what it is like to feel problems and pains and you rush to help them. Jesus has that same ready eagerness to help us! When you turn to Jesus, you will get a compassionate response!

Jesus is there today to help you make it through, to help you to overcome in your time of suffering and testing or temptation! We are to TAKE HOLD of his mercy and willingness to help. This is the larger message of the book of Hebrews! Do not shrink back

from him who came to be such a great Savior! Do not drift away from him! Do not neglect such great Savior. Do not neglect his salvation! Do not neglect his help!! Rather live with complete confidence in Jesus and his help for whatever you are going through!

Believing in Jesus is entering into a present experience of living with Jesus now today, as our merciful helper. We go to him each morning and submit our lives and hearts and thoughts to him. Every day we put our confidence in him, and trust him with all that is going on. I start calling for help the first thing I wake up. And I never get tired of experiencing Jesus and his merciful help!

So we are fully prepared to live life with confidence today and we are fully prepared to die without fear! You really are fully equipped for life and death! Do you believe that today?