

Scripture: Hebrews 2:5-18

Message: Jesus, Our Brother

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*Read Hebrews 2:5-8*

Read those verses again. Do you hear what they say?

You are amazing!

You are the crown of creation!

You are royalty, wearing a crown of glory and honour!

You have authority. You're in charge of everything! And, yes, by *everything* I mean the whole creation!

Stop looking around to see who I am talking to. I'm talking to you. To each and every one of you. People. Women. Men. Girls. Boys.

This is who God made you to be: people of glory and greatness and authority.

But what do we see?

Drug overdoses. Sex trafficking. Bombs. Volatile comments on social media. Disregard or suspicion of those who are different. Garbage swirling around in our oceans. Suicide. Abuse.

Oh, there are some good stories. There is refugee sponsorship and volunteer service and people who pick up garbage and generous giving.

But let's make this personal. In these verses, do you see a picture of yourself? Feeling strong? A crown of glory on your head? Using the forces of nature for your purpose? Or do you feel helpless, caught in a world of being controlled by things rather than controlling them. Feeling a slave to the phone rather than in charge of it. Making questionable decisions. Giving in to bad habits that you've tried for so long to change.

The truth stated in these verses of Hebrews 2 is that whether you look in the mirror, or you look around, the people you see *are* visited by God, *are* crowned with glory and honour, *are* higher than all the stars and lord of all creation.

For this to make sense, we keep reading in Hebrews 2

*Read Hebrews 2:9*

The words quoted in the previous verses are from Psalm 8. That is not typically a Psalm that is identified as a "messianic psalm," or a Psalm that speaks of the promised Messiah and deliverer to come.

As in the beginning verses of this letter to the Hebrews, the author again draws us to

look at Jesus. Here is the person who took on human flesh, becoming like us, part of this creation, a little lower than the angels. He identified with us in all things, except for sin.

He defeated sin and death and is now crowned with glory and honour. In Jesus we see who we were made to be. In Jesus we see what we can become.

It's not just about looking in the mirror and looking around. We look up, seeing Jesus at the right hand of the Father. This is who we are. We don't focus on fault and failure and disappointment. We focus on hope. We *can* work to make this world a better place, to make it into what God intended. We work for justice. We care for creation. We help the poor. We love our neighbour.

We become like Jesus, not defeated by the power of sin, or surrendering to its effects, but overcoming its power. The life and love of Jesus flows in and through us by the power of the Holy Spirit who gives us new life.

This is not just a power trip, to be like Jesus. "Ooh, look at me...I'm in charge." No, when we talk about being like Jesus, think about nearness to God. Think about knowledge of God's heart and will. Think about being filled with praise, forgiven, free to live for God.

The author continues explain what he is saying in verse 9 in the next verses.

*Read Hebrews 2:10-15*

This is where it gets interesting and possibly confusing. Jesus, who is God, became human just like us. Jesus became perfect through suffering. But wasn't he perfect and sinless already? Yes. Read this verse from this angle: Jesus became completely/perfectly like us (people) through his complete experience of the suffering that we experience. He identified with us in the deepest level of anguish, and so became qualified to pay the price for our sinful imperfection.

Jesus became like us, so that we can know that the fullness and completeness of his victory is also ours. We can overcome temptation. We can make things right. We do not have to fear death. Jesus has won that victory for us.

Being like us, being one of us, Jesus took our sin on himself on the cross. We do not have to pay the punishment for our sin. It is finished! Amen! Praise the Lord!

Here is the great and ultimate paradox. The Son of God humbles himself to become human. Victory and power is achieved through humble service. The heart of God is revealed through death and resurrection.

We live in a world that emphasizes power and might. Bigger. Stronger. Better. Bigger armies. Better guns. Money is power. More money is more power.

We can easily fall into that trap of thinking that God's blessing is evident when we see his blessings in becoming rich or being healthy. Or power is found in Christians taking on government control or power.

But these verses put in front of us that the heart of God is seen most clearly in the cross. To restore creation, to restore the relationship between God and his people, Jesus humbled himself, even to death on a cross.

Think about the song in Philippians 2:5-11:

In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.

*Read Hebrews 2:16-18*

He had to be made like his brothers and sisters.

In verse 11 we read, "he was not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters." Jesus is our brother.

The quote in verse 12 is from Psalm 22. That's the Psalm Jesus quoted while hanging on the cross. The first verse of Psalm 22 reads, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The Psalm also speaks of hope and victory as we get to verse 22. Jesus, who suffered our pain and agony and punishment for sin has also won the victory and rose from the dead. Jesus, who cried out the words of this psalm in agony, also shouts out the words of this psalm in victory. He is not bitter toward us that he took a place of suffering. He is excited to identify with us as his brothers and sisters and praise God together with us.

This starts to sound like a lot of theology here. It might seem a bit heavy. But it's important to understand this. It's what the author has been saying in the first verses of chapter 2. "We must pay careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." This is important stuff. It's not just stuff for angels. It's the life and death, the life and breath of who we are as people, as children of God.

God is telling us all this for our benefit, for our blessing. Because we are important to him. We are not just some blobs in his vast creation. We are his image bearers. We are special in his sight. We are crowned with glory and honour. We have been given a particular

and unique task of authority over all creation.

God wants us to know and celebrate the relationship we have with him. It's a relationship made possible by our brother, Jesus.

Yes, it gets that personal with the almighty God of heaven. God is our Father in heaven. We are sons and daughters of God, through Jesus, our brother.

Be sure to notice this amazing truth in these verses: Jesus is not ashamed to "call" you brother and sister. He doesn't just think it; he *speaks* it. He doesn't just whisper it in the quiet of your prayer closet. He declares it in the middle of the crowd. He posts it on the jumbotron. He turns up the speakers so everyone will hear. He not only wants *you* to know he's proud of you; he wants others to know as well.

Here we have this picture of Jesus walking through this sanctuary, asking each of us to stand one by one, looking us each in the eye, embracing us and calling us brother/sister. Then he turns around to look at the rest of us and says, "Do you see this person? This is my brother, my sister." All the while he's bursting with pride and joy.

He's like our big brother on the playground and we're the little kid. He's important and special and we're just a nobody. But he's proud of us. He's stands by us. No bully dares push us around. And he takes joy in being our brother.

This is a different way to think of Jesus, isn't it? If we can imagine Jesus calling us brothers and sisters, if we can hear him doing so, it will change the way we think about him. It will change the way we think about ourselves and about God. In other words, it will change the way we live.

That's our relationship with the God of heaven. A life of victory and hope and promise. A life of comfort and peace to overcome fear. A life of presence and trust that God is with us. A life of assurance that sin and guilt is taken care of.

A life of service and humility to share this presence of God with others. A life of thankfulness as we treat others as brother and sisters in Jesus.

Remember where we started? Look in the mirror. Or look around you. See the people who are visited by God, crowned with glory and honour, higher than all the stars and lord of all creation.

Because Jesus is our brother. He has restored our relationship to the way God intended it to be. He became like us, to take our sin on himself and to win the victory over sin and death for us. Therefore we are his brothers and sisters, children of God, crowned with glory. We are given the purpose to serve God and change the world for his praise.

Amen.