

Finally. A True Human.

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November 22, 2009
First Baptist Church
Vancouver, BC, Canada

Text: Hebrews 1 and 2
Title: Finally. A True Human.
Series: Who is Jesus?

Prayer:

*Preach through me Lord
the Words of Life
so we may hear
in the Name of Jesus Christ*

Sermon:

The Biblical text before us today
is the same text we inhabited last Sunday.
The text is the first and second chapters
of the New Testament document called "Hebrews".
Both chapters,
Hebrews 1 and 2 together.
Always together.

As we noted last Sunday,
Hebrews is a sermon.
One of the most eloquent sermons
we will ever hear.
One of the most artfully crafted sermons ever written.

Composed in such a way
that we do not really hear chapter one
without also hearing chapter two.
And vice versa.
We do not really hear chapter two
without also hearing chapter one.

In Hebrews 1 and 2
we hear God speaking about and to Jesus!
And we hear Jesus speaking about and to God!

More precisely
 in Hebrews 1 and 2
 we hear God the Father speak about and to
 Jesus the Son
 and Jesus the Son speak about and to
 God the Father.

Even more precisely
 in light of what is revealed in Hebrews 1 and 2
 we hear God the Father speak about and to
 God the Son as one of us
 and God the Son as one of us
 speak about and to God the Father.

So listen
 as Lilloc, Chris, and Peter
 read to us
 the opening section of the
 theologically and rhetorically exquisite
 "sermon to the Hebrews".

[Readings in three voices from Hebrews 1 and 2]

Prayer:

O Living God
we believe You inspired the author of Hebrews
to write what we have just heard.
Will You now help us understand the words.
And more than understand
will You help us actually live in the
reality
the words are announcing.
In Jesus' name
we pray.
Amen

Did you hear all the references to angels?
 Angels this, angels that
 angels here, angel there
 eleven times angels, angels, angels.

Why does the author of Hebrews,
 an obviously educated, intelligent thinker,
 refer to angels so much?

And what do angels have to do with
 hearing God the Father speak about and to Jesus
 and
 hearing Jesus
 speak about and to God the Father?

As we noted last Sunday,
 the people of the first century
 lived in a universe filled with angels.

So do we!

It is just that they knew it
 except for the Sadducees,
 who believed neither in angels
 nor in the resurrection,
 which is why they are "Sad-you-cees".

For people of the first century
 angels served as
 the agents of communication
 between God and humanity.

For people of the first century
 angels were a kind of delivery service.

It was thought
 that angels both
 brought God's word to humanity
 and brought humanity's word to God.

Imagine the diagram:
 God "up in heaven",
 humanity "down on earth".

It is thought that
 God mediated His relationship with human beings
 through angels.
 Angels carried God's messages to humans,
 and angels carried human messages to God.

The author of Hebrews
 wants people to realize that
 although that view of the world
 may be true,
 in the coming of Jesus,
 things have [something has] changed.

Jesus now mediates this relationship
between God and humanity.

Jesus is the One Who brings God's Word to humanity
and Who brings humanity's word to God.

Jesus is the One Who carries God's messages to humanity
and carries humanity's messages to God.

Jesus is the one final, sufficient mediator
between God and man.

That is what being High Priest is all about.

Jesus, the High Priest, comes to us from the presence of God
and draws us into the presence of God.

He is the only Priest who can do that.
He is the only Priest we need.
He is the only Mediator we need.

So the author of Hebrews begins his sermon with good news.

Chapter 1 verse 4

Jesus has become much superior to the angels.
Superior to the angels,
why?

Why is Jesus a superior mediator than the angels?
Why is Jesus
more able to serve the role of mediator?

Answer?

Jesus is the superior mediator
because,
unlike angels,
Jesus knows both what it is like to be God
and what it is like to be human.

Jesus can
mediate God to us because He knows God
and knows
what it is like to be God.

Jesus can
 mediate us to God because He knows us
 and knows
 what it is like to be us.

As I pointed out last Sunday,
 the Latin word for priest
 is pontifex.

Pontifex is an engineering term.
 A pontifex builds bridges.

A priest builds bridges.
 A mediator builds bridges.

Now ... in order to build a bridge
 the builder has to know both sides
 of the canyon
 over which the bridge
 is to be built,
 right?

Jesus is the great bridge builder
 because He knows both sides of the canyon very well!

He knows the divine-side
 because He is divine.

He knows the human-side
 because He is human.

Jesus is superior to the angels
 because ...
 Hebrews chapter one ...
 He is God.

Jesus is superior to the angels
 because ...
 Hebrews chapter two ...
 He is a man, The Man.

Let me briefly review
 what God the Father says
 about and to Jesus the Son.

Hebrews 1:5

"You are My Son,
today I have begotten You."

Begotten.

Not made. Let me emphasize it again.

Begotten, not made.

What we humans make
is not us.

An expression of us ... but not us.

What we humans beget
is us ... in some way.

We make cell phones and rocket ships.

But we beget babies.

Humans beget humans.

What God makes
is not God.

An expression of God ... yes.

Psalm 19

"The heavens are telling
the glory of God."

But the heavens are not God.

Neither are elephants

or eagles

or humans.

What God makes is not God.

But what God begets is God.

God begets God.

"You are My Son ...
I have begotten You."

Not just an expression of God ...
but God.

Hebrews 1:5 again

"I will be His Father,
and He will be My Son."

The most intimate relationship in the universe!
And the Source of all other relationships.

Hebrews 1:6 - "Let all God's angels worship Him."

The Father is telling us
that the urge we feel in the presence of
Jesus of Nazareth
the urge to adore Him
is right.

It is wholly appropriate.
It is wholly Holy.

When the Magi come from the east and
find Jesus in Bethlehem,
they fall before Him -
just an infant! -
and worship Him.
Their hearts get it.
"Worship My Son."

Hebrews 1:8

"Your throne, O God, is forever"

"O God"

The Father addresses Jesus, "O God"!

Hebrews 1:10

"In the beginning, O Lord,
You laid the foundations of the earth."

The Father addresses Jesus, "O Lord"!
The Father declares that the world
in which He delights
is the work of His Son.
Jesus is the Creator of all things.
"You, O Lord"!

And, Hebrews 1:13

"Sit at My right hand
until I make Your enemies
a footstool for Your feet."

"Sit Jesus ... sit
 for Your work is done.
 Your death has accomplished
 all I said it would."

Now ...

Let us listen to Jesus speak about and to God.
 Or more precisely,
 let us listen to God the Son as one of us
 speak about and to God the Father.

Notice how I have been putting it.

"Listen to God the Son as one of us."
 As one of us.

For that is what the author of Hebrews
 is emphasizing in chapter two of his sermon.
 One of us.

He who is God - "O God"
 becomes one of us.
 A human being.
 A real human being.
 A fully-human human being.

Indeed, He becomes

THE human being.
 The Representative human being.
 Not just "one of us" ... but
 He becomes us!!

Now, before listening to Jesus speak about and to God the
 Father,

let us take time to
 observe how the author of Hebrews
 demonstrates the real, full humanity of Jesus.
 It's rich! ... the text is so rich!
 taking us deep into the mysteries of the Gospel.

The author begins by quoting Psalm 8.

"What is man
 that You are mindful of him,
 the son of man that You care for him?"

The poet-King David
 stands out under the star-lit night sky
 and is awed by
 the fact that the awesome Maker of the stars
 recognizes and pays attention to
 us puny creatures
 on this small planet
 in the universe.

In Psalm 8
 we have a "Biblical theology of humanity".
 God's original design
 if you will.
 "A little lower than the angels."
 In the Hebrew of Psalm 8
 it is "a little lower than God"!

The term is "elohim",
 the plural form of the noun "El",
 the garden variety word for God.

The Greek translation
 from which the author of Hebrews is quoting
 renders "elohim" not as God but as angels.

Either way the text is pointing to
 the greatness of us
 puny creatures!

Some of you
 may remember the movie "Roots"
 about American slaves
 tracing their African ancestry.

In one scene
 in Kenya, I think,
 a grandfather
 takes his newly born grandson
 in his hands,
 lifts him up toward the sky,
 points him
 to the God of heaven, and says,
 "Behold!
 the only thing greater than you."

"A little lower than the angels."

"Crowned with glory and honour."

We were made to reflect the glory of God;
made to reflect the nature and character of God.

Crowned by God
to be God's royalty.

Princes and princesses in the Castle
we were made to be.

"Everything under their feet", says the Psalm.
Created to rule with God in the world [on the earth].
Created as vice-regents.
Created to run
and run in the Castle
on behalf of the Great King.

The author of Hebrews adds
"in putting everything under humans,
God left nothing that is not subject to them."

God's co-carers,
co-workers
in the Garden
and in the Castle.

Yet ...

Hebrews 2:8

Yet ...

"Yet at present
we do not see everything subject to humanity."

A fact we all know ... and feel painfully.
Every time we think we have to go to war.
Every time an epidemic sweeps through a population.
Every time a drug dealer sells his poison.
Every time a woman's body is exploited on the Internet.
Every time a doctor says to us,
"I cannot do anything more for you."

We hear the "Yet we do not see everything subject to humanity".
 We know something has gone wrong.
 Gone wrong.

The French mathematician-philosopher
 Blaise Pascal was right [puts it so well]:
 "All the miseries of man
 prove His grandeur;
 they are the miseries of a dethroned
 monarch."

But.

Hebrews 2:9

But.

"But we do see Jesus."
 In the midst of the Garden
 that has become a cemetery,
 in the midst of the Castle
 that has been invaded by alien forces,
 we see one human being
 who is crowned with glory and honour.

Now ... here is where
 realizing that Hebrews 1 and 2 belong together
 comes into play.

According to Hebrews 1 who is this human of Hebrews 2?

It is God!

The human we see in the midst of all the wreckage is God.
 The man is God.

"You shall call His name
 Immanuel ... God with us"
 Or more literally,
 "the with us God."

"A little lower than the angels",
 says the author of Hebrews.
 Down where we are
 with us "lower than the angels".

Amazing

He who made the angels ... and the stars,
now lower than the angels ... and stars!

"Sharing our flesh and blood",
says the writer of Hebrews.
"Like us in every way."
Not a phantom
but our flesh and blood.

"Tempted in every way as we are", says the author of Hebrew.
Tempted in our broken world
not to believe.
Tempted to live
with the self at the center.
Tempted to live
an autonomous life.
Tempted to live
a self-directed life.

Hungry.
Thirsty.
Tired.
Lonely.
Betrayed by friends.
Abused by enemies.

Tempted and tested
in every way we are.
Indeed, to even greater degree than we are!

God the Son
really one of us
really one with us

Immanuel, going through all the stages of
physical, emotional, and mental development.

As a 12 year old boy
in trouble with His mother
because
He sought to live obedient to His Father.

He tastes death.

Dorothy Sayers
brings this out
so meaningfully in her Christmas play,
"He That Should Come".

She has the three magi
the three wise men who have come across the desert
from the east
express their hopes [aspirations]
as they act out
in response to the message of the star
to find the new born King.

One of the magi
Balthazar
expresses the feeling of
countless human beings.

"All I ask is the assurance that I am not alone,
Some courage, some comfort
against the burden of fear and pain.
About my palaces the jungle creeps
and winds.
Famine and plague are my fireside companions
And beyond the circle of the fire,
the glare of human eyes
Fear in the east, fear in the west, armies
And banners marching and garments rolled in blood.
Yet this is nothing if only God will not be indifferent.
If He is beside me, bearing the weight of His own creation,
If I may hear His voice among the voices of the vanquished,
If I may feel His hand touch mine in the darkness,
If I may look upon the hidden face of God
And read in the eyes of God
That He is acquainted with grief."

Hebrews 2
the God of Hebrews 1
knows grief.
As one of us He tastes death.

As one of us
God tastes death.
In the eyes of Jesus
I see that God knows grief.

And because He has tasted death,
 He is perfected. (this is a mystery)

Hebrews 2:10

"the author of their [our] salvation
 made perfect through suffering",
 through tasting death.

So fully human,
 so truly us,
 that He matures into His
 fully-mature-humanity,
 through what He suffers
 in our broken world.

A great mystery.
 Jesus the Son,
 so fully human,
 so truly us,
 that like all humans
 He grows
 into His full maturity.

Like a seed.

A seed may be perfect
 as a seed.
 But it is not yet what it is intended to be
 until it
 grows out of its "seedness".

And it grows
 by dying,
 by giving up its life
 to the ground.

God the Son
 so completely human
 He becomes
 He becomes what He is intended to be [all He is]
 through suffering.

Now ...

Why does He do it?
 Why does He Us is God
 become a real, fully-human human?

"To render powerless
the one who holds the power of death", says the author of
Hebrews.

The Son enters into death.
He tastes death
to de-fang death.

The mystery of it!

Jesus conquers death
not by avoiding it
or commanding it to disappear
but by experiencing it.

The Man Us is God
enters the devil's realm,
tastes death, swallows death,
and thereby conquers it.

By giving Himself over to the power of death
He renders it powerless.

Last Easter

I quoted the Welsh preacher
Peter Joshua, who said,
"When death stung Jesus Christ
it stung itself to death."

By death He conquers death.

And thus Jesus steals
the enemy's chief weapon,
the fear of death.

God the Son

becomes fully Us

"to deliver those", says the preacher,
"who through the fear of death
were subject to fear all their lives."(NASB)

or

"to free those
who all their lives
were held in slavery
by their fear of death."(NIV)

By conquering death through
dying our death

Jesus sets us free from
the "emotion that distorts
our existence."

Jesus sets us free
from the fear of non-being
and therefore
from all the ways we
try to stave off non-being.

Death
no longer has the finality
it once had.

All of this is made possible,
says the author of Hebrews,
because God the Son as one of us
deals with the problem of sin that brought death
into being [which caused the problem of death] in
the first place.

He becomes Us
to atone for sin.

To give Himself
as the final sacrifice
that takes away
the barrier
sin erects between us
and God.

He becomes the merciful High Priest,
the faithful High Priest,
Who at once is
the One who offers the sacrifice
and [is] the sacrifice itself.

Which is the great theme of the rest of Hebrews.

And He does it all
to bring us to glory.

Hebrews 2:10
"In bringing
many sons and daughters to glory."

Jesus is the pioneer of our salvation,
 out front, clearing the way,
 leading us into the fullness of our salvation
 which is "glory".

We were originally made [created]
 to reflect the glory,
 to reflect the nature and character of God [the
 Creator].

And God the Son
 as one of us
 is bringing us back into that original design.

Which is why
 He is not ashamed to call us "brothers and sisters".

Hebrews 2:11
 "Jesus is not ashamed to call them,
 broken human beings,
 brothers and sisters."

Glory!

The most perfect human being
 who ever lived
 God in our flesh and blood
 is not ashamed
 to stand before the watching world
 and point to us and say,
 My "brothers and sisters"
 [call us "brothers and sisters"].

We might be ashamed to do that.
 Right?

Are there not times
 when we are ashamed
 to say of one another
 in our brokenness
 "brother and sister"?

Not the God-Man!
 He is not ashamed.
 He is not ashamed of you or me.

"This Man welcomes sinners
and eats with them",
say the Pharisees. (Luke 15:2)

They say it out of disgust.

"This man
this Jesus
this so-called Holy One
welcomes sinners."

"As members of His family"
that is what the word "welcome" means.

This Man
eats with sinners ... disgust!
and welcomes them
into His family ... disgust!

Tarnishing the reputation of the Holy God.
Not so,
says Jesus,
not tarnishing the reputation of Holy God,
honoring the reputation of Holy God.

This is the reputation
the Holy God wants to have in the city.
"This Man
eats with sinners
and welcomes them."

He is not ashamed
to call us "brothers and sisters".

And now we hear Him speak
now we hear God the Son as one of us
speak about and to God the Father.

Listen ...

Hebrews 2:12

"I will declare Your Name
to my brothers and sisters."
... in the congregation
"I will declare Your Name."

It is the driving force of the whole of Jesus' earthly ministry.

He lives and dies
 to announce
 to reveal
 the Name of His Father.

"Name" is a way of saying
 nature or character.

In the first century
 if you knew someone's name,
 you knew something about the person's
 nature and character.

Jesus lives and dies
 to make His Father's nature and character
 known to the world.

Jesus lives and dies
 to show us
 Who the Father is
 and what the Father is like.

As He prays in His great High Priest prayer,
 recorded in John 17,
 "I have made Your Name known
 and will continue to make it known."

It is the driving force of the Son of God.
 [The deepest desire of God the Son's heart.]

"I will declare."
 "I will announce."
 The term the author of Hebrews uses
 is another word
 the early Church used for its preaching.

"I will preach",
 says God the Son as one of us.

"I will preach"
 revealing [leading us to] one of the mysteries
 of this moment
 and every preaching moment.

When a preachers
 steps forward
 to preach the Name,
 he or she
 does not stand alone;
 he or she
 stands with the Great Preacher.

In every preaching moment
 Jesus Himself is preaching.
 All preaching
 participates in His preaching.
 It is because He [Jesus] is preaching
 that preaching stirs our souls,
 lifts our spirits,
 changes our minds.

 [that our souls are stirred,
 our spirits are lifted,
 our wills are changed.]

Hear the Son
 say to His Father
 "I will preach your Name"
 among my brothers and sisters.

Hebrews 2:12 again
 "In the presence of the congregation
 I will sing Your praises."

Of course!
 Given what the Son knows about His Father,
 given the love the Son has for His Father,
 of course He sings the Father's praises.

Jesus sings!
 Sings to His Father
 about the brothers and sisters in the congregation.

Wouldn't you like to hear Him [Jesus] sing?
 What a thrill that would be!
 To hear
 the only-begotten Son
 sing His heart out to His Father!

What would He say?
 Would that someone
 could write the songs
 Jesus would sing.

Would sing?
 Would?

I should say is signing.
 The songs the Son is signing.
 For here we have another mystery
 of this moment
 and every moment of worship.

When we sing our praises
 we are not singing alone.
 Yes, we are singing with one another.
 But the mystery is
 we are singing with Jesus!
 He is the great worshipper
 in the congregation.
 Just as the Father
 exhorts angels ... and us
 to worship His Son,
 so the Son invites us to join Him
 as He worships His Father.

Hear the Son
 say to His Father,
 "I will sing Your praises."

Hebrews 2:13
 "I will put My trust in Him."

To trust God
 is the greatest [highest] act of worship.

To trust the Father
 is the greatest response that we can give to the
 revelation of the Father [of His Name].

The Father deserves trust.
 Given who He is, He deserves the trust of humanity.
 In every circumstance [situation].
 At every moment.

Not to trust is a huge affront to His glory.

Not to trust
 is to say,
 "You are really not
 as good as You claim to be;
 You are not
 as faithful, merciful, powerful
 as You claim to be."

Trust is
 the highest form of worship.

Do we trust?
 Do you trust!
 Do I trust the Father
 as He deserves to be trusted?

No.
 I do not.
 I try to give the trust God deserves but I
 can't.
 [I try ... but I do not trust
 as God deserves to be trusted].

But Jesus does!
 The Man does.
 The God-Man does.

He Who is Us trusts
 on our behalf.
 He believes on our behalf.
 He believes for us!

Jesus is the great Preacher.
 He is the great Worshipper.
 And He is the great Believer.
 The Son of God
 as one of us
 gives the Father
 all the trust the
 Father deserves!

And one more
 word from the Son
 to the Father.

Hebrews 2:13

Listen ...

"Here I am
and the children God has given Me."

"The children God has given Me."

Jesus sees us as gifts!

Jesus sees us as the presents the Father
gives Him!

Jesus is the Father's gift to us.

And we are the Father's gift to Jesus!

We are gifts!

"Here I am

and the children God has given Me."

["Here I am

and the all children You have given Me."]

"Here I am."

"Here I am."

"Here I am."

Do you hear what Jesus is saying?

Those steeped in the Bible,

in the Old Testament,

as the author of Hebrews,

would have heard loud and clear.

"Here I am." "Here I am."

The Father is finally

getting an answer to the very first question

He asked humanity.

In the Garden

in the Garden which

had become a cemetery

because of the sin of Adam and Eve ...

in the Castle where the princes and

princesses had rebelled

God calls out,
 "Where are you?"
 And the humans hid from God
 afraid to come out from behind the
 trees.

"Where are you?"

"Here I am."

"Here I am",
 says the Representative human.

"Here I am",
 says God the Son as one of us.

"Here I am",
 says the One Who is Us!
 "Here I am ...
 and all the children [those] You
 have given Me."

That is the Gospel
 of Hebrews 1 and 2.

God so loves humanity
 that He becomes humanity.

God so loves us
 that He becomes us.

God has not given up
 on His original design.

The living
 God so wants us
 to be all He wants us to be
 that He becomes what He wants us to be!

"Here I am."

Finally.
 "Here I am."
 The one true human
 God the one true human!

And that, brothers and sisters, is why we are drawn like a magnet to Jesus of Nazareth.

That is why we find Him irresistible.

He is everything we were meant to be.

He is everything we long to be.

To Him be all the praise and glory now
and forever more.

Amen.

[Blessed be His Name ...
forever and ever.]