

“An Anchor for the Soul: Perfect Through Suffering”

Hebrews 2:5-10

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

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As Christians we often say that Jesus is the solution to all the world's problems. More specifically we say that Jesus' death and resurrection are the solution. That raises a question. If the solution to the problems in the world today is the death and resurrection of Jesus, which happened 2,000 years ago, why do we have so many problems? And we have problems!

No doubt you have all heard about the shooting at a community college in Oregon this past week. One of the most disturbing things about that event is that some of the survivors have reported that the shooter asked students to stand up if they were Christian and when they stood he killed them. It doesn't get widely reported but this has been a common thread among many of these events. But that's not the only bad thing going on in the world. Just in this weekend's news we hear that the violence in Syria continues to get worse, an Air Force plane crashed in Afghanistan, and a mudslide in Guatemala has claimed numerous lives. Look around you. Marriages are falling apart. Lives are being consumed by addiction. Poverty and homelessness is growing in our community. Who is running this world? And why are things the way they are? If Jesus is the solution, why do we still have these problems?

That little house church of Jewish Christians in first century Rome had problems, too. They were facing persecution like we can't even imagine. They had been pushed to be bottom of the social ladder and were falling fast. And they were asking the same questions about God. They were thinking, maybe we would be better off going back to the synagogue. It seems safer. In the face of all that, the writer of Hebrews has the audacity to say that this is all according to God's plan. Jesus is already on the throne, ruling his kingdom. But he doesn't stop there. In today's passage we find him quoting Psalm 8: "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You

made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet."

Have you ever wondered why God put you here? There are over 7 billion people on the planet currently. Earth is only a tiny speck in the Milky Way Galaxy. From what scientists can see there are millions of galaxies in the universe. It's easy to feel insignificant, to feel like you don't really matter. This is really what King David is trying to say in Psalm 8. "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" Who am I that the God who created everything by His word would be concerned about me?

There's something amazing in this passage from Hebrews. To see it we need to back up and review something we talked about last week. Chapter one, you'll recall, is a picture of the greatness of Christ. He is the perfect imprint of God. He is the creator of all things. He is superior to angels. He is superior to the prophets and even to the Bible. Jesus is the Son. He is perfectly and fully God. After that beautiful picture of Christ, chapter 2 begins with a warning: "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard – that God now speaks directly through the Son – lest we drift away. We are warned not to neglect such a great salvation. It's a dangerous thing to neglect our salvation. Why? Because our salvation is more than just the forgiveness of past sins. It also contains a promise. Let me put verse 5 into context for you. We could read it something like this: Pay very close attention to Jesus. Do not neglect this great salvation *because* it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come. It is subjected to *you*."

Psalm 8 continues, "What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" Yet you have made him a

little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him *dominion* over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.” God’s original intention for humanity was to share in the work of managing the world. We see this at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 1:26. God says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion.” That’s kingdom language. Do you see what Hebrews 2 is saying? It’s not angels who will rule the world to come, it’s us. Verse 8 says, “Now in putting everything in subjection to him (that is, to mankind), he left nothing outside his control.

And there’s the problem. It doesn’t appear that things are working out that way. We can’t control our own selves, much less control a hurricane or drought or earthquake or tornado. We certainly don’t have dominion over all of creation. We are not what we were created to be. G.K. Chesterton rightly said, “Whatever else is true about man, this one thing is certain—man is not what he was meant to be.” The problem, of course, is sin. When sin entered the picture the image of God in us was obscured. It got covered up. Death entered into our human experience and none of us is able to overcome it.

But someone *has* overcome it. Jesus. The writer of Hebrews points out what we all know. “At present, we do not see everything in subjection to man.” Boy is that an understatement. But verse 9 adds, “But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death.” Here we see how Jesus is the solution. You and I have a future and a hope because Jesus died on that cross. We are saved by Jesus’ humiliation, which was not just his crucifixion but his birth. The eternal God, creator of the billions of galaxies and stars and planets and the incredibly diverse and complex life right here on our planet, the one for whom and by whom all things exist, *that* God humbled himself and was born into the human experience. As verse 9

says, “for a while he was made lower than the angels.”

That’s exactly what the Apostle Paul was getting at in our reading from Philippians. God the Son humbled himself to become one of us. One scholar put it this way: “whereas the height of exaltation for man is being made a little lower than the angels, it was for Jesus the depth of his humiliation.” Jesus came to our level so that we could be lifted to his level, or as our passage puts it, “bringing many sons to glory.” Jesus, as the perfect God-man, has reopened the door for us to become what we were created to be. He is able to save perfectly because he has been tempted and has suffered like us. He is now able to fully sympathize with our fallen condition.

So what do we do? How do we let this speak to us and change us today? First of all, as we saw last week, pay close attention to Jesus. Listen to his words, study his actions. Spend time with his bride, which is the church. And then second, remember that whatever troubles you face, whatever it is that you think is too big for you to handle, whatever tragedy or difficulty is waiting for you when you walk out of these doors, this is all temporary. What really matters is the world to come where Jesus is already crowned with glory and honor. And our present suffering serves to prepare us for that reality. That’s not to say that this life isn’t important – it is very important. But our understanding of where our future lies should motivate us to change the present, working to bring many to glory. That’s the work of every Christian and it’s not insignificant. In fact, it’s eternal.

Amen