

The Reasons for Christ's Humanity

Christ's Humanity

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sermonaudio.com

Preached on: Sunday, December 23, 2018

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Well, I know that if you're a regular part of our church, that you understand that the things of which we have sung and read about already today are the reason that we have for living, that in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ we have everything that is necessary to cheer our hearts, to motivate us to live another day, to find purpose and hope and comfort in the midst of much affliction and sorrow and even sin, that Jesus Christ has come from heaven in order to save sinners just like you, and that tells us that God is favorably disposed toward us; that the coming of Christ tells us that there is a gracious intention of God that is at work even in the midst of your tears, even in the midst of your sins, even in the midst of your loss, that Christ has come and this tells us that as it stands today, the disposition of God is one of favor, one of grace, one of kindness toward his people, and we need to come and rest there. We need to come and remember that. We need to come and find our satisfaction there and there alone because in Christ we have our hope. Ephesians speaks about Christ being our peace and Christ is our hope as well.

So what we're going to do here this morning in our time in God's word is we're going to explore the reasons for Christ's humanity. You know, we talk about Christmas being the Incarnation of God and rightly so, the birth in Bethlehem that was prophesied in Micah 5:2, and rightly so do we talk about those things, but I never want us to lose sight by repetition again and again, I want this to come back so that it is always clear in our minds that Bethlehem had as its destination the cross, and not to look at the manger nativity in isolation but to view it as the purpose for which God did this. You know, if you think about it in just trying to understand and glimpse into the mind of God, why would he go to such a fuss to come to earth, to leave heaven as the Son of God did, there must be meaningful reasons for that unless we were to charge God with doing something irrational and without purpose. So while we gladly remember and joyfully celebrate what many call Christmas, we want to view it from the fullness of its context that we would appreciate the true significance of it; that those of you who are not in Christ would be drawn to him as he is lifted up through the preaching of his word here today and as a body of believers together, that we would rejoice afresh in the love that Christ has manifested for our souls in doing what he has done. We speak today of the greatest good news that there could ever be, the reasons for Christ's humanity.

Now for those of you that weren't able to be with us this past Tuesday evening, we saw the reality of Christ's humanity in our study together, and I know some of you aren't able

to be with us for family reasons on Tuesday but you join us on the live stream and that's wonderful, we saw the reality of Christ's humanity. He had a real human lifespan, he had real human needs, he had real human emotions, he had a real human death, all of those things showing us that his humanity was real. It was not a fantasy. It was not just an image of something that wasn't real. This was real humanity in real time verified by hundreds of witnesses who saw him after his resurrection, even. The apostles and the circle of those who were around Christ saw him with their own eyes, heard his voice with their own ears, touched him with their own hands, and the normal means of the acquisition of human knowledge were used to understand that Christ's humanity was real and it was manifested to friend and foe alike over a period of 33 years, and especially in the time of his public ministry.

So we're dealing with a humanity that was real, that is an established fact of history, that is something that we understand that our redemption is rooted in time and space reality and that we speak not of silly fables or of stories that have simply been corrupted over the course of time. We believe God's word and every word that it says about Christ, and God's word testifies to itself of its truth, of its power, of its authority. So as we go through God's word, we find that which we can believe, that it is a trustworthy account of what really happened in the life of Christ, but even more what I would encourage you to keep in mind as you contemplate what we will look at today, that it is here in the things that we will discuss today, it is here that you can lean the entire weight of the eternal need of your soul for forgiveness of sin and to know that an adequate supply has been given, not only adequate for you, adequate for everyone who believes, and the invitation goes out to everyone who would believe in Christ, that they too can be saved. These are the greatest themes that human tongue could ever declare and that human ears could ever hear, these things that explain for us the reason for Christ's humanity.

Now just to always keep things in balance as best as we can, the emphasis on Christ's humanity does not deny his deity. Jesus is fully equal with God. There is God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, and it was that second person of the Godhead that took on humanity. The Apostle Paul put it this way in Philippians 2:6-7, that "although He," meaning Christ, "existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped," a thing to be clutched, a thing never to be let go of, "but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men." Christ fully cognizant of his full equality with God was willing to leave the glories of heaven and did so in order to take on human flesh. He emptied himself by taking the form of a bond-servant. He left that exalted position and for a time on earth took on the role, took on the form, took on the real nature of a human slave, being made in the likeness of men. As we've asked in the past, we ask again this morning, one question plunges you into the depths of the mind of God, the love of God, the eternal plan of God, one simple question in light of those truths plunges your mind into the riches of divine revelation. Why? Why? "God, why would You do that? Christ, why would You do that? It is contrary to Your self-interest, so it would seem. It is contrary to Your self-interest to abandon heaven to come down here to live like us? To identify with us? To do so knowing that it would lead to Jerusalem, that it would lead to Your ultimate crucifixion in seeming shame and dishonor? Why would You do that?" Why would God devise such a plan?

Well, we want to look at four aspects of that, four reasons for Christ's humanity here this morning. And to remind you, in case you're sitting in back and you don't see up front, that we're doing this with a goal of preparing our hearts this morning for the taking of Communion, for the remembrance of the death of our Lord even as we gather in the name of his birth, to celebrate Communion and to remember our Lord as he has commanded us to do. All of these things, these four points that we'll discuss here today, will prepare our hearts for a fresh appreciation of our Lord as we remember him with the elements of Communion.

Why would Christ leave glory to take on human flesh? Here's your first answer: it is to be our mediator with God. To be our mediator with God and, beloved, you need a representative before God. You're not fit to go before God on your own and that is the most essential realization that a man could come to who is not yet a Christian. There are two aspects to this, first of all, what you need to understand is that there is an infinite gap in who you are compared to who God is. There is a gap, an infinite chasm of a gap between your essence as a sinful man, a sinful woman, and the infinite, holy God.

In Exodus 15:11, we read this, it says, "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?" We are creatures of flesh, finite, limited knowledge, limited ability. God is infinite in holiness, in majesty, in glory. Shekinah glory surrounds him, emanates from him dwarfing and consuming all around. Hebrews says that our God is a consuming fire. Well, look, none of us are like that. You're not like that. I'm not like that. So how are we ever going to be reconciled to our Creator when there is such a gap in essence as that? There is no answer to that apart from Christ but that gap in essence is compounded by a spiritual gap as well, a spiritual division, you could say, between you and God, a spiritual gap caused by your sin.

Isaiah 59:2 says, "your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." There should be dawning upon your mind afresh, for some of you perhaps for the first time, just how profound this measure, this aspect of our existence is. God, holy and majestic, infinite Creator. You, finite creature. Where is there any basis for fellowship there? God, holy and separated from sin. You, lost in sin. You, a lover of sin. You as a Christian, still corrupted by the remaining remnants of sin in your own existence. Where are we ever to find communion with the God who made us? Where are we to find release, where are we to find hope in the fact that our sinful condition by nature and by choice is worthy of the eternal judgment of God? Where are we to find that? You know, you could pull out everything you had in your pockets and lay it on a table and it's a trifle; it's nothing that you could pay to bridge that gap. You could live a thousand lives and never pay for a single sin, let alone the multitude that you have committed. And you could live a thousand lives and never change the essence of being a fallen creature, a child of Adam, even in this hyperbole with which I speak, if you could do all of that, at the end of the thousand lifetimes you'd be no closer to reconciliation to God than where you began. In fact, it would just be worse because it would just be a thousand lifetimes of further sin

and disobedience against your God. The point is this: that you need help. You are helpless. Lost. Separated from God. You need help if your sins are to be forgiven. You need help if you're ever to be in the presence of God. You need help if you are ever to see him face-to-face and from that understanding, then, what Scripture says about the purpose for which Christ Jesus came is glorious.

Turn in your Bible to 1 Timothy 2, if you will. 1 Timothy 2. I could have kept reading this morning in our Scripture time and gone to this but remembering that earlier in 1 Timothy 1, Paul said that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, aha, all of a sudden there is a spotlight of hope that is brought into the darkness. All of a sudden there are strains of music beginning to play in the midst of the deadness of our spiritual lives; that there are notes of a melody of hope that start to sound. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. You say, "Ah, I'm a sinner." Precisely. "Do you mean to say that Christ Jesus came to save someone like me?" Exactly. All of a sudden there is all of the reason in the world to pay heed to the Incarnation of Christ, to pay heed to why he came. What is it that he did? Who is it that he is that addresses this need of this gap that we have between us and God?

Look at chapter 2, verse 3, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Verse 5, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time." God in his infinite majesty, in his infinite holiness, separated from you by your finite essence and your sinful being and no way for you to bridge that gap, now we see why Christ came, he came to save sinners, he came to be a mediator, he came to be the go-between between God and sinful men just like you. A mediator is one who intervenes between two separated parties. Christ came so that he could represent God to you and that he could, in turn, represent you to God, and that there would be a go-between, a mediator, an exclusive one who can bring separated parties together. That's why Christ came. He came to be a mediator. It was the purpose for which he came.

Now let me just say a word of pastoral encouragement and a word of pastoral hope to those of you that struggle with the darkness of your sin, either lost in sin, never having come to Christ, living with regret over your past sin, feeling the weight of your sin even of the past week, which is pretty much to one degree or another all of us, right, because this is the nature of our existence. It's a sin-tinged, sin-tainted existence that we have and those who take it seriously, who take sin seriously, in one way or another feel the weight of it, right? Well look, the entire reason Christ came was to deal with that, was to take that burden, was to take that guilt, was to take that shame away, to remove that wall of separation, to remove that barrier so that you would have free access to God, so that what you need to see in this hour, what you need to see as we contemplate Communion, as we remember the coming of Christ and that he came to be our mediator, is that the very weight of which I have spoken here is the very reason he came was to remove that impediment from your fellowship with God; to replace the sense of guilt with a sense of peace, a sense of reconciliation, a sense that things have been made right by someone outside of you, so that in Christ, the very weight of sin is removed and as you trust in

Christ, as you look to Christ, as you put your faith in Christ, you realize that the biggest, most serious need of your human life, of your human existence has been resolved. It's why Christ came. It means that the guilt that has plagued your mind, the vain regrets over the past, do not have to define your perspective on life going forward. Your perspective on life going forward can be, should be, must be shaped by the fact that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners just like you. And I know the mindset, "But I'm such a bad sinner. I've done so much. I've so greatly sinned against Him." Yeah. Right. I get that, but Paul said he was the foremost and Christ came to save him. If he saved the greatest sinner, surely he'll save the lesser sinners like us that are gathered together in the room. If the purpose of Christ could include the greatest sinner like Paul, then it includes everyone else.

Another pastoral word along these lines. It's funny how sin can distort people's thinking in so many different ways but, beloved, there comes a point where in trusting Christ, yes, your sin has been great, yes, the blackness of your prior life was profound, but faith means that you look beyond your sin and look to the one who took your sin away, that Christ came in order to save you from that, and really at the root of that mindset is really nothing more than pride at the root of it. "I'm too great a sinner for God to forgive." No, don't talk that way. You're denying the Incarnation. You're denying the cross when you talk that way. Rather humble yourself and realize that as great as your sin is, the sacrifice, the merit, the glory, the righteousness, the love of Christ is even greater than that, and humbly receive him, humbly receive the forgiveness that he brings to everyone who trusts in him, and let your heart be at peace. Let your heart rest in Christ. "Yeah, I've sinned so much," you could say. I certainly could. But the whole point of the Gospel, the whole point of the Gospel of which we sometimes sing in this hymn, is that in Christ God has provided us a grace that is greater than all our sin. We believe that. We trust him for that and we commit ourselves into the hands of Christ alone for that and we find our joy, we find our rest, we find our peace in that because it is enough for your accusing conscience to know that God has accepted the sacrifice of Christ for your sin and if God has accepted the sacrifice of Christ for your sin, then your conscience must fall silent before that because God is greater than your conscience, God is greater than your memory. God has accepted Christ and, therefore, your conscience is compelled to accept it as well when you trust in Christ and you commit your sinful soul to him for redemption. Beloved, these are the most wonderful things that human ear could ever hear. There is a means of reconciliation with God because Christ came to be the mediator between us and God.

Now, secondly, and we're kind of blending these things together as they are intended to be. We can separate these four points this morning for analytical purposes but they are all of one woven cloth together. It is one woven cloth of the great righteousness of Christ and the shed blood of Christ that settles down upon the soul and covers the soul that trusts in him. We don't rend these things apart, we just see different aspects of it so that that melody, that music, those joyful notes of redemption and forgiveness and peace can ring in our ears. Here's the second melody of the work of Christ, the second reason for his humanity. 2. He came to be our substitute sacrifice for sin. To be our substitute sacrifice

for sin. In his person, he is our mediator. His mediating work is premised on the work that he did for us at the cross of Calvary.

Now, let me remind you of some familiar Bible truth as we take these things in together today. Those of you joining us over the live stream as matters of illness have kept you away from us, we offer these things to you as well. Scripture tells us that all men have broken the law of God. Scripture tells us that the wages of sin is death and for redemption to take place, why did Christ become a man? For redemption to take place, human intervention was necessary. We needed a man, we needed a human captain, a human head of the race to come and intervene on our behalf. We have nothing to offer to God for the forgiveness of our sin. It's not enough to feel bad about it. You could cry all day about your sin but it's not going to grant any forgiveness if there's not intervention from outside of you. Scripture tells us that something with a different nature could not redeem man. The Old Testament had its pattern of animal sacrifices but Scripture tells us that they never rendered permanent forgiveness. Hebrews 10:4 says, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Now along with that, you could say that it is impossible for your works to take away your sins. Once you've polluted the fountain, you can't bring anything from within yourself that would satisfy God.

You know, I realize that it's Christmas, not Good Friday here, but every year it seems like around Good Friday you can find pictures of people under Catholic influence, you can find stories of people often in the Philippines who will crucify themselves publicly and they will beat themselves publicly, supposedly in a manifestation of regret and remorse over their sinful ways. Well, beloved, you should never look at that and think that that is something holy, that that is something good, that that is something righteous. There are two perspectives with which to view that. 1. This is just a display of flesh, of someone saying, "Look at me," and in pride offering up that from the flesh as though that would satisfy the Spirit of God. There is nothing good in that whatsoever. Nothing good in that whatsoever. And also you must understand from a theological perspective why that is nothing more than a waste of time at best. At best it is a waste of time, it's because that person is guilty and the sacrifice offered to God for the forgiveness of sin must be without blemish, without spot. So you could beat yourself and crucify yourself for a thousand lifetimes and it wouldn't do you a bit of good because the sacrifice has to be sinless and you don't have anything that is untainted by sin to offer to God. So you could crucify yourself as these people pretend to do, and it will do you no good. It is a vain, flesh-oriented kind of religion that actually just multiplies their guilt even more. No, we must come to God through the means that he has appointed. We must come through his mediator. We must come through the sacrifice that that mediator offered and Scripture tells us that Jesus became a man so that he could pay the penalty of sin on our behalf.

Look at Romans 8 and as you're turning to Romans 8, stick your finger in the book of Galatians as well. Romans 8, and then in a moment we will look at Galatians 4 as well. Romans 8:3. Remember we're answering the question why did Christ become a man. What were the reasons for Christ's humanity. In Romans 8:3 we see this, "what the Law could not do," we could not justify ourselves by our obedience to the law. The law cannot reconcile you to God. You cannot start obeying God's law and think that that's going to

reconcile you to God because the law does not have a provision for the taking away of sin. In Romans 8:3 then, Paul says, "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Christ came in human flesh so that he could offer a human sacrifice to God for the forgiveness of your sin. He had to be. It took a human sacrifice to substitute for human sin. Without that, there would be no redemption because Scripture tells us that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. So Christ had to become a man. Christ gladly became a man so that he would have righteous human blood to offer up to God as a propitiation for your guilt and shame and sin in violation of his law.

Now look at Galatians 4 where it says, "when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that," for this purpose, to this end, "He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." Jesus was born of a woman in order that he might redeem us from the requirements that God's law places on men. So he was born as a man that he might redeem us from the requirements that God's law places on men, lived his life in perfect obedience to that law so that there was a righteous dimension to his shed blood, and a righteous merit to his life and to his shed blood that now he is able to share with everyone who comes and believes in him for their salvation, who trusts in him alone, who puts their faith in Christ alone for their redemption. That's why he became a man, to become our substitute sacrifice for sin and because Christ offered his life in that way, God's wrath has been satisfied. God accepted his sacrifice.

Look at Hebrews 2, beginning in verse 14. It says, "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood," since they share in humanity, "He Himself likewise also partook of the same." He shared in our humanity. God the Son took on human flesh with a goal toward death. It says, "that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels," Christ did not become an angel so he wasn't coming to redeem fallen angels, he came to redeem fallen men and in the order of creation, that's amazing, and in verse 17 it says, "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Propitiation, that he might offer a sacrifice that would satisfy the wrath of God against your sins, and he took on human flesh in order to himself be that sacrifice. The wonderful thing about Christ is he's the priest that offered the sacrifice and he was the sacrifice himself. He offered up himself for your redemption and he had to be a man to do that.

So we find that in Christ, why did he become a man? What were the reasons for the humanity of Christ? We needed a God-man to be our mediator to bridge the gap in essence and guilt between us and God. Christ did that. We needed a human sacrifice for sin that we weren't qualified to offer, that no one else was ever going to be qualified to offer. Christ stepped into the gap, Christ as the only one with the essence and the

qualifications to be able to do that, gladly stepped into the gap, gladly offered that sacrifice on the cross.

Look at 1 Peter 3:18 where this idea of sacrifice and mediation, although the words aren't used, is present in this signature text about our Lord Jesus. 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust," substitution, in other words, "so that He might bring us to God," mediation. He mediates. He substituted for us. He's the most wonderful one ever. There is no one better than Christ in our estimation. There is no one higher in our affections than this one who did that for us.

Now that's at the core of our redemption. Now we come to Christ. Now those of us that are in Christ, we have this remaining period of time that the Lord gives us on earth and how are we, then, to live? Where do we look to find our example? Well, that brings us to the third aspect of the reasons for Christ's humanity. He came, in part, to be our pattern for life. To be our pattern for life, point 3. Because Jesus was a man, his life gives men who have been redeemed by him an example to follow.

You are in 1 Peter, turn to chapter 2. 1 Peter 2. We'll just barely touch on this. We'll briefly bounce on this here. Because Jesus was a man, his life gives you an example that you can follow. 1 Peter 2:21, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." An example for you to follow in his steps. Verse 22, "Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." Jesus who was a man, responded to unjust mistreatment with patience and without retaliation. He entrusted his situation to his heavenly Father and what Scripture is saying in a simple principle whose application and ramifications go everywhere, says you look to Christ for your example.

Do you find yourself frustrated in your immediate earthly circumstances? Do you find people that are mistreating you, perhaps even in the most intimate of your relationships? Do you find others disappointing you with their actions, with their words, with their lives? I do. I won't illustrate it. It's not within my immediate household but people disappoint me just like they disappoint you and what are we to do with that when we encounter it and life becomes difficult as a result? First of all, you look to Christ for your example. You don't retaliate against those who personally wrong you but here's the point that I want you to see above all else from this text and from this pattern, the pattern for Christ for you in those times of human disappointment that I know are so real and profound for some of you, and this is really really immediate in the nature of life today for you.

Look at the end of verse 23 as you feel afflicted, as you're waiting as things aren't working out on your time table, verse 23, what did Christ do that gives you the pattern for where you go, where you respond to those things today? He "kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." Christ in his earthly life in the midst of his affliction, looked to his Father and entrusted himself to his heavenly Father. Beloved, do you

understand, do you see that that is your pattern as life is making you wait? As life is being difficult? As people are being difficult? As circumstances are robbing you of your joy? Don't you see, beloved, that the pattern of Christ as you look to that, as you look to those things, as you feel the weight of that affliction is to go to your Father and say, "Father, You have loved me enough to send Christ. Father, You are in perfect control of every circumstance. Father, I know that You love me and I know that You intend good for me even though I don't feel it or see how it could work out that way right now. Father, rather than collapsing in regret or frustration or anger or retaliating or striking out against those that have put me in this position of affliction, Father, I'm just going to entrust myself to You. I know who You are. I know that this is why Christ came. I see that this is what Christ did in His earthly life, He trusted you during the time of his affliction, Father, that's exactly what I'm going to do. I trust You. I submit to You. I accept this affliction. I accept this disappointment in this time that You have appointed for me, and I am going to trust You that You will work this out in a way that pleases You and is good for me in Your time, and in the meantime, Father, I want You to know I'm content that Christ loves me and gave Himself up for my soul. I'm content to be reconciled to You. I'm grateful for that and that's enough to satisfy the longing of my heart."

Now, beloved, that's kind of convicting, isn't it? The joy of that, the rest in that, the peace of that which is what our Lord deserves as our response, I realize that it's convicting to realize that that's not always the condition in which our heart operates. What I want you to see today is that this is where you move from your sense of disappointment or discouragement and you move in this direction, Christ entrusted himself to the Father during a time of earthly affliction. "God, that's what I want to do too. I want You by the power of Your Spirit to move me into the living reality of what Christ did before me." Right? Right.

Now, as you do that, beloved, as you do that there's a final thought that is especially sweet and it is one that I understand it is so easy to fall short of this. You could be with me, Christian, you could be with me in all that I've said in these first three points, I get the fact that Christ is my mediator, I get his substitute sacrifice, I get that in the meantime he's an example of trusting the Father during my time of affliction, and I said these four are all a woven garment together that clothe you, but here's what I want you to see, here's what I want you to remember as we contemplate the Table in just a few moments, here's what I want you to think, better yet, here's how God would have you think about his Son in the midst of those afflictions that you're trusting him for; what your perspective on the way that Christ responds when you come to him like that, you come to him confessing your sin, you come to him confessing that you've been dissatisfied with life. My own mind is convicting me as I say these things. I'm preaching to myself now. You're just listening in, except I am preaching to you. How are we to think that Christ receives us when we come like that and we come laying our guilty untrusting souls before him and say, "I want to move in the direction of trust. I know I've fallen short," with what spirit, with what attitude does Christ receive his people when they come to him like that? Don't trust your feelings on it because your feelings will tell you he's still mad, he's still angry, or at least they might. Here's the fourth point, why did Christ come in human flesh? He came to be our sympathetic helper. He came to be our, and I emphasize the word today,

our sympathetic helper; that he receives you in sympathy, in empathy, in kindness, in mercy, with a sense of understanding and the desire to comfort you in the midst of it. Because Christ lived as a man, he can sympathize with your experiences of sorrow and frustration with the realities of life.

Look at Hebrews 2 again. Hebrews 2. And you know, some texts are familiar for a reason. Some texts you go back to again and again because they're just so central, because they're so foundational, because they shape your worldview in a way that flavors all of life. Those of you that have been under the weight of various kinds of affliction, hear the word of God right here in chapter 2, verse 18, "For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered," Christ was tempted, Christ suffered, what does that mean for you and me as we come to him trying to entrust ourselves in the midst of our weakness and affliction and sometimes failing often in the process? Well, verse 18 means that "He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted." He has the ability to understand. He has the ability to sympathize because he has been a man too. He has lived in the midst of the contradiction of sinners against himself. He was on the receiving end of hostility, or rejection. He was on the receiving end of the dusty roads of Jerusalem. He was on the receiving end of the crown of thorns. He was on the receiving end of the spit. He was on the receiving end of the beating fists against him. He was on the receiving end of the mocking. He knows better than us the fullness of what sin unleashes against those trying to live for God.

So he knows what it's like and in his humanity he felt the pain of that. He felt the betrayal of Judas prophesied in the Psalms beforehand. "It was you, a man I shared bread with that's betrayed Me." Well, those of you that have been betrayed, you have a sympathetic helper in Christ. He knows what that betrayal is like and so what that means is when you come to him, he receives you in kindness, he receives you in mercy, he receives you with a perspective that he himself has been there, he himself knows what that's like. He knows that that's difficult and, therefore, he receives you as a sympathetic friend. What a friend we have in Jesus, all our griefs and sins to bear.

Look at chapter 4 of Hebrews. Hebrews 4. So we picture ourselves in our frail, fallen, failing humanity, failing as Christians, coming to Christ weary from the load, weary of our own failure, weary of what the world inflicts upon us, and we come and we lay it out before our Christ and what is his response? Verse 15 of Hebrews 4, "we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." Then the command. The exhortation. Understand that this is more than just a general invitation to take or leave as you wish, this is the command of God for the comfort of your soul that we read here in verse 16, this exhortation. It says, "Therefore," because Christ has been a man and has suffered, the reason for his humanity leads to this conclusion, "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Are you tempted today? So was Christ. Are you suffering? So did Christ. Are you in physical need? So was Christ. Are you slandered? So was Christ. Have you been betrayed

by friends. So was Christ. Is it a season of weeping in your life? There has been some serious loss in our congregation over the past year, a little over a year, times and seasons of weeping. Are you weeping? So did Christ. Charles Spurgeon found comfort in the humanity of Christ when he said this in his exposition of Psalm 88, and I've gone back to this text again and again and again in my own heart and in my own life, realizing that the Prince of Preachers found in the humanity of Christ that which comforted him in the midst of his affliction and depression. Spurgeon had the humility to say this about himself. He said this and I quote, "He who now feebly expounds these words knows within himself more than he would care to tell of inward anguish." This is Charles Spurgeon. "I know more about inward anguish than I would care to say," he said. Continuing the quote he says, "It is an unspeakable consolation that our Lord Jesus knows this experience having with the exception of the sin of it, felt it all in Gethsemane when he was exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

You know, we don't say this tritely and we don't say this in a flippant casual manner, we say this as an earnest summary of the teaching of Scripture that God would have you take and reflect and meditate on to be the strength and comfort and encouragement for you even in the midst of the worst of your times. Jesus understands. Jesus cares. Jesus will help. It's why he came.

Now why would God bother? Why would God bother? Why not use his celestial foot, I speak in metaphor and hyperbole, why not use his celestial foot and kick the earth like a soccer ball and kick it away for all of its manifest rebellion against him? Why bother? Because he's a God of love. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Why did Christ become a man? Well, he came to be our mediator, our substitute sacrifice. He came to offer his life as an example to us. He came to be our sympathetic helper. But you probe just a little bit more and say, "But why? Why? What's in it for Him that He doesn't already have?" Why that for sinners like you and me? Why? Because it's his nature to love. It's his nature to sacrifice on behalf of his people. It's his nature to love and comfort those who are like sheep without a shepherd. That's who he is. Those of you in the midst of great affliction in Christ, out of Christ, I invite you to come to this sympathetic one. Those of you not in Christ, I call upon you to repent of your sin and to receive this gracious Savior. There is no justification anywhere in the universe in the course of infinity for any sinner to spurn an offer like that. There is nothing lacking in Christ. There is no willingness lacking in Christ. He calls you to come and he will receive you and save you. Why would you not do that?

Struggling Christian, I would just remind you, you know these things. We've rehearsed them. To realize that in Christ you have one, just as he received you when you came to him in the first instance and cried out for mercy knowing you were a sinner, yeah, you find yourself having stumbled again. He hasn't changed. His loving gracious disposition is just the same. You can come to him confessing your sin and know that he'll receive you well. What a wonderful Savior.

Let's bow together in prayer as our young men come.

Our Father, we thank You that in Christ You have given us the fullness of Your blessings. This Christ is one of us and He is near. We thank You for the goodness of Christ toward us. We thank You that we can trust Him for all things. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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