

The Main Point: We Have Such a High Priest

Hebrew 8:1-6

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Introduction:

Today in our sermon series from the epistle to the Hebrews, we have come to chapter 8.

- The author has been telling us about the excellence of our Lord Jesus Christ and His priesthood, and he is going to keep telling us about that right on into chapter 10,
 - Having told us about how He was made a priest after the order of Melchizedek and how He is a priest that is able to save us to the uttermost;
 - He is going to show us in 8:7 – 10:18 how He is the Mediator of a more excellent Covenant, how He serves in a more excellent sanctuary, and how He has a more excellent offering. He alone is able do what is necessary for our salvation.
- And right here in our text today—Hebrews 8:1-6—he pauses so we can stop and consider what the main point is.
 - What is the point of all this he has been saying about Christ and His priesthood?
 - He wants to make sure that we have not lost the plot—that we have not forgotten what all this is about.
- Take a listen and then we will unpack what is here.
 - This is the Holy Word of God. Hebrews 8:1-6. Be blessed as you hear!

Hebrews 8:1-6: Now *this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,* ² a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. ³ For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.* ⁴ For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests

who offer the gifts according to the law; ⁵ who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” ⁶ But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

Thanks be to God for His precious word.

I. Here the author attempts to centre us on the principal point.

A. He is very direct about it.

- He says: “**Now this is the main point of the things we are saying.**”
 1. Such directness is very helpful.
 - It has a way of getting our attention.
 - It makes us say, “Wait, have I been missing something here?”
 - He doesn’t want us to miss what all of this talk about Jesus as our priest has been about.
 - Some of it has been hard to understand—and he has said a lot.
 - But now he is saying, “Let’s just pause right here and take a moment to centre ourselves again on what this is all about.”

2. The word that is translated “main point” actually has a broader meaning.
 - It also speaks of a summary.
 - Some translate it, “Now to sum up all that we are saying.”
 - This is what all this is about if we boil it down... this is what you need to take away from all of this that we have been talking about.
 - I think the word *pith* is helpful here.
 - What is the *pith* of all that we have been saying here?

TRANS> And what is it?

B. “We have such a high priest.”

- This is stunning!
1. Note the word *such*. He is *such* a high priest.
 - We have been hearing all of these things about Him being the One who is without beginning of life or end of days... who was made priest with an oath... who is not only a priest, but also the king of righteousness and the king of peace... who is a merciful and compassionate high priest...
 - We have heard how He is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, and how He has passed through the heavens to sit at God’s right hand,
 - And how He is able to save to the uttermost those that come to God through Him...
 2. And now we are told that we have Him!
 - So simple, so stunning, “We have such a high priest.”
 - We *have* Him.
 - He is ours—He is a priest for us.
 - We read in Song of Solomon where it says, “I am His and He is mine.”
 - Think of that.
 - He is not somebody else’s high priest—He is *our* high priest.
 - He is a priest like no other. He is the only priest who is actually able to save anyone from their sins and bring them God.
 - He can do that. He alone can do the thing that needs to be done.
 - And He is our priest.
 - His ministry is for our benefit. Our names are on His breastplate.
 - He loves us. He loves you. He did His work for you. He lives to make intercession for you. He went to the cross for you. He gives His Spirit to you. He is committed to you forever. He is your prince, and He is your husband forever.
 - We have such a high priest!

C. That is what matters in all that has been said.

1. His excellence has not been pointed out as a matter of mere speculation—
 - As something curious to ponder.
 - As something that makes little difference to us personally in one way or another.

2. My friends, a priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices to restore sinners to God.
 - Pause for a minute. Is anything more important than that?
 - His role is to take those who are cut off from God, who have made themselves unacceptable and obnoxious to God by their sin—who have offended Him so much that their destiny is everlasting torment in the Lake of Fire...
 - His role is take such and bring them to God so that they can have God as their God.
 - To take those who don't know God, who can't look upon Him—not because of His glory that is too intense for us to behold—not that...
 - but I mean who cannot look upon Him with true comfort and affection, with gladness and adoration, with delight and hope—
 - but only as condemned, bitter sinners who cannot love Him and cherish Him—
 - Apart from His ministry, we are all like that.
 - His role is to take sinners like us and bring us to God so that we can love Him and rejoice in Him and cheerfully serve Him and live with Him and know Him and receive His mercy and grace and blessing...
 - So that we can live in sweet harmony with Him—we who otherwise would only be always out of harmony.
 - So we can become warm and ardent in our affection for Him and see His beauty and sweet excellence.
 - I am zealous for you all to know Him like this!
 - Some of you don't because you won't have Jesus as your priest—you won't cast yourself upon Him. You won't plead for mercy from Him.
 - No—you go on grinding away in bitterness and distance from Him as if He were harsh and cruel—as if the problem is with Him when it is all with you.
 - It rankles you for me to say that, even though you know it to be true—in fact, because you know that it is true and are trying not to face it.
3. The main point is that we have such a priest as Jesus who can bring us to God!
 - If you do not know God by Him, you have not come to Him.
 - You have not fled to Him for refuge.
 - Your obedience is all toilsome and laborious, and the more you try, the more it kills you.
 - You settle for a shallow distant formal relationship with Him—one that cannot satisfy you on your bed at night.
 - One that can never make you feel safe with Him, that can bring you peace and rest and real trust.
 - This priest has come.
 - He is here to save sinners. He is able to save sinners. He saves all who come to Him.

- We have Him in the church—He is ours—He is yours if you will simply say, “Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner! Lord, save me!”
- He is a merciful and compassionate priest and He will never turn you away if you come to Him.

TRANS> We are meant to stop right here as we go through Hebrews and ponder what it is to have such a high priest.

- We are to delight ourselves in what a difference it makes to have Him.
- Let’s look at four things that are said of Him in our text.
 - First, that you have Him, the priest who is seated at God’s right hand.
 - Second, that you have Him, the priest who is a minister of the sanctuary and tent of heaven.
 - Third, that you have Him, the priest who has presented an acceptable offering for His people.
 - Fourth, that you have Him, the priest who is the mediator of the New Covenant.
- So...

II. First, that you have *Him*, this priest who is seated at God’s right hand.

- This is in verse 1:
 - **We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens...**

A. What a glorious description!

1. To be seated at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens is to be seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
 - God the Father is here called “the Majesty in the heavens.”
 - To be seated at the right hand of a king’s throne is to be entitled to exercise the king’s authority.
2. As I pointed out to you when we studied Psalm 110, to be at the right hand of Yahweh is unheard of—
 - It is to have divine power at your disposal.
 - Of course, as the Son of God, Jesus has had this power from all eternity, for He is fully God, but what is so marvellous here is that He was given this authority after He became our priest—taking our human nature that He might represent us before God.
 - In our human nature as Mediator, He is now reigning at God’s right hand. He was exalted to highest place of all authority.
 - As He said, “all authority had been given to me in heaven and earth.”
 - He has been made the final judge of all. He is Lord of all.
 - John Brown says:
 - “He is exalted to reign along with God. He has all power in heaven and in earth—according to whose will all the energies of omnipotence go forth,

either in the production of external events, or in the diffusion of inward influence.”

- John Owen says:
 - “Higher expression there cannot be used to lead us into a holy adoration of the tremendous invisible glory which is intended.”

3. It is noteworthy that He is *seated* at the right hand.

- The priests in the Old Covenant *stood* when they went into the emblematic temple where they were only permitted once a year.
 - They stood because they were only there to present their sacrifices and then they had to leave.
 - They were not there to rule at God’s right hand forever.
 - Their work was never done—their offerings must go on year after year, and in the outer court, every day, morning and evening.
 - Symbolically, they never sat down like Jesus did in the true presence of God.
- His sitting shows that He has finished offering His sacrifice.
 - That has been done and it never needs to be done again.
 - He is there at God’s right hand to reign with omnipotent power forever.
 - He is settled and secure as our priest.
 - He has fully purged our sins.
- As John Owen said,
 - “And this is the eternal, stable condition of our Lord Jesus Christ, our high priest, a state of inconceivable power and glory.”

B. To have such a priest as our priest is a thing that is most excellent!

1. It means that your priest has divine power to exercise in your behalf forever!

- It means that He is head over all things for the sake of us His people who have trusted in Him.
- It means that He works in us and that He works for us in all of history by His sovereign power.
- It means that He will destroy all the enemies of His people and root out all the hypocrites.
- It means that He exercises divine power to transform us into His likeness and to preserve us to end when He will perfect us.

➤ Q.1 in the Heidelberg Catechism asks:

Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul,
in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.

He also watches over me in such a way
that not a hair can fall from my head

without the will of my Father in heaven;
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.

2. Do you have Him? Embrace this. Let it work in you practically—relationally.
 - There is no place for merely formal religion here—we are talking about real power to transform you—
 - Do you look to Him to do so? Are you being transformed?
 - If not, lean hard upon Him—cry out to Him to do His work.
 - Furthermore, with such a priest, you have hope in all your afflictions.
 - He who had omnipotent power has wisely designed them.
 - By your trials, He has put you in a place from which you can trust Him more, know Him better, become better.
 - Nothing is out of control with this priest as your priest.
 - Trust Him. All will come out well. He knows what needs to be done for you and that is exactly what He is doing.
 - What hope! What confidence!
 - I don't say that we always have a sense of hope and confidence when He stretches us, but we always have grounds to have it.
 - Our priest is at the right hand of the majesty on high!

III. Second, that you have *Him*, this priest who is a minister of the sanctuary and the tent of heaven.

- Verse 2 describes Him as: **a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.**
 - We just saw that He is seated because His offering is complete and He is settled, but that does not mean that He is not actively ministering.
- A. He is a minister of the sanctuary... the holy dwelling place of God.
- The sanctuary is the place where we meet with God—not a building made with human hands, but the eternal presence of God.
 - It is the trysting place where we encounter God.
 - It is the place where we are mindful of His presence, where we see something of His glory and power, where we worship and adore Him.
- B. I am not talking about going through the motions—I am talking about those times when you truly connect with God.
- When you see Him as He is and you delight in Him—when He speaks to you by His word and Spirit and you praise Him.
 - Jesus brings that connection about as the minister of the true sanctuary.
 - I don't prefer to use the term sanctuary for the place we assemble for worship.

- I don't have a strong opposition to it; God has given us ordinances that we are to use in our worship...
 - But the goal is not just to go through the paces—the goal is to meet with the living God—to know Him—to see His glory—to have Him revealed and to praise and adore Him—to truly encounter Him which may be done any time and anywhere.
 - Jesus establishes that connection for us as our priest and as our liturgist—our minister of the sanctuary, He brings us to the Father.
- This is the reason New Testament religion is so simple.
 - The early church was ridiculed by the Jews and the pagans because they had no altars, no priests, no sacrifices, no temple...all these that were made with human hands were gone because the reality had come.
 - When you have all those things, God can be absent from your worship and nobody even notices. That can happen with Biblical worship too.
 - Sadly, it happens a lot.
 - Do not be content with that—cry out to Jesus as the minister of the sanctuary.

C. The tabernacle is God's tent or house in the midst of His people.

- Once again, we are no longer talking about a building here, as in the Old Covenant.
 - It is a tabernacle that is not made with hands—it was erected by God.
- Calvin and Owen both think that the tent refers to Christ's body.
 - His body is certainly called a tent and it is a tent that God prepared for Him, we are told that He came to tabernacle or tent among us.
 - It is through His body that we have communion with God—even His body that was broken and crucified.
 - We meet with God only through Him crucified.
 - We have a service He has given us so that we may draw near and seek Him by means of this tent, represented by the bread and wine.
 - Our goal is never merely to put bread and wine in our mouth.
 - Our goal is to have communion with our God through His Son who came to die for us.
 - It is a living dynamic ongoing relationship—not a mere liturgical act.

IV. Third, that you have *Him*, this priest who has presented an acceptable offering for His people.

- This is brought out in verses 3-5: **For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer. ⁴ For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; ⁵ who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."**

A. It is a little hard to follow here—some things in Hebrews are hard to understand...

- But the idea is that since the OT priests represented the people, they could not go into the sanctuary without offerings.
 - They could not go in without offerings because the people they represented were sinful and offerings were needed to atone for their sin.
 - What they did in the earthly tabernacle was patterned after God's true tabernacle and represented what Christ must do in it.
 - The point is that if offerings had to be brought in the symbolic tabernacle, Christ surely had to bring an acceptable offering to the true sanctuary.
 - He too was representing sinful people.
 - What was true of the pattern we learn about in the Old Testament, was certainly true of the true tabernacle in heaven.
 - The fact that Jesus went in as our priest to the true tabernacle and was received and was able to sit down at God's right hand tells us that He had to have had an acceptable sacrifice!
 - He could not have gone in in our behalf without one.
- B. Later on, the author is going to tell us about the offering that Jesus offered for us.
- Of course we already know what it was—it was the offering of His own body and soul on the cross for our sins.
 - He is the lamb that was slain and that God accepted.
 - But the author's point here is that we have in Jesus a high priest who has been accepted in the true tabernacle because He made an offering for our sins that was acceptable to God.
- C. This ought to have a profound effect on you!
1. You need not carry guilt around.
 - Your priest has been accepted in your behalf.
 - You are completely forgiven.
 - You don't have to do some penance or some good deed to make up for your sin—you have such a priest as Jesus Christ.
 - Do not dishonour Jesus by acting like you need some other priest or some other sacrifice or that you have to do something to make it right.
 2. Be comfortable with God.
 - You are reconciled by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.
 - Rest in what He has done and be at peace in your conscience forever.
 - Do not let the accuser gain any ground with you.
 - The blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses you from all sin.
 3. Don't let a cloud of guilt darken your relationship with God as you walk into the future with Him. Know that you are fully accepted, fully forgiven, fully justified.
 - You have this priest as your priest who has been accepted in the true tabernacle because He had something to offer!

V. **Fourth, that you have *Him*, this priest who is the mediator of the New Covenant.**

- Verse 6 explains that because of all that He has done, **“He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.”**

A. With Jesus as the priest who has come after the order of Melchizedek and has gone into the true tabernacle for us, there is a new covenant with better promises.

1. There is good reason for this.
 - The priests of the Old Covenant were just representing on earth what Christ was going to do in heaven.
 - As we just saw, theirs was the pattern and Jesus’s was the true tabernacle, true connection with God (not in a building), a true sacrifice for sin.
 - The result?
 - With His priesthood, there is a new covenant with better promises.
2. The old covenant could not through its priestly service provide forgiveness of sins or transformation of sinful hearts.
 - It could point to that, but the priests by their ministry could not provide that any more than a game of monopoly can make you rich.
 - You can get the best property and thousands of dollars in the game of monopoly, but the property and the money are not real.
 - In the case of the priestly service of the Old Testament, it represented what God would do through Christ, but it had not power to do it.
 - It served its purpose, but its purpose was not to actually take away our sin or to transform us.
 - It was to represent Jesus who was to do that and who now has done that.
3. So in the new covenant actual transformation and actual forgiveness is promised.
 - It is promised because Jesus can bring that about through His priestly service. We have such a priest!

B. And my friends, if you are trusting in Him, you have what is promised in the New Covenant.

1. Peek down at verses 10 – 12 and you can see the promises:
 - Heb 8:10-12: **“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”**
2. We will explore this in a lot more depth in our next Hebrews sermon.
 - But in brief, when God says He will write His law on our mind and heart, and that He will be our God and that we will know Him,
 - He is telling us just what we have been considering today.

- That we will not just have a formal relationship with God, but that through Jesus's ministry, we will actually come to know Him so that we will live for Him—we will respond to Him as our God. We will trust Him and obey and truly worship Him—not just acts of worship, but we will truly love and adore Him.
- We will obey Him because we love Him—it will not be grinding away with guilt trying to obey, it will be our delight to do His will.
 - We will grow into that—even to delight to suffer for His glory when called to do so. We will grow into that as we lean on Christ.
- And we will actually have forgiveness of sins by Christ.
 - Verse 12 again: **For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.**
 - With Christ, we have the full assurance that since He has been accepted, so are we.
 - Better promises of a better covenant when Jesus is our mediator...
 - Such a high priest He is! And He is ours!

Conclusion: That is the principal message of Hebrews.

- We have such a high priest!
- He is ours and when He is ours, everything is ours.
 - We have Him!
 - Do you have Him?
 - It is the most important thing of all.
- I will close with words from the Apostle John.
 - **1 John 5:10-13: He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God.**