

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “Jesus, the Great High Priest” from the “Anchored” sermon series

Scripture: Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of the Book of Hebrews, we read about Jesus as the Great High Priest who represents us in God’s presence. Every year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest (those in charge of the temple) would go into the Temple’s innermost place and make a sacrifice for his own sins and that of all the people. The Priest sprinkled himself with the blood of the sacrifice to cover the sins of the people to God.
- In verses 14-16 of chapter 4, the author of Hebrews is reminding us that just as the high priest enters the Temple’s holy of holies space on the people’s behalf, Jesus has entered heaven on our behalf. Jesus came to the world as a human to know what it was like to live in a fallen world and be able to...” empathize with our weakness...” As people of God, we can “...approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find *grace* to help us in our time of need.” This speaks to both the majesty of God (“throne of Grace”), yet also His love and compassion for us.
- In Chapter 5, verses 1-4, the high priest comes to the role “...when called by God, just as Aaron was.” The high priest was able to “...offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.”
- In verses 5-10, when the high priest is selected, he represents “the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. Jesus is our high priest and God exalted Him to this role, saying “You are a priest forever, in the order of the Melchizedek.”
 - Melchizedek was a priest and king of Salem in ancient Jerusalem
- During the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry, He “offered prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears...” and “...learned obedience from what He suffered...”. From this Jesus was “made perfect” and “became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him...” As this chapter began by explaining the high priest Aaron was surrounded with weakness, he was able to have compassion on the weak, sinful people. In the same way, Jesus faced hardship and has compassion for all who suffer and fall short.

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- The theme verse for this sermon series *anchored* comes from Hebrews 6:19: “We have this hope as an *anchor* for the soul...”
- As we discussed in last week’s sermon, the Book of Hebrews is a word of exhortation or encouragement, to ethnic Jews who are struggling to maintain their faith in Christ from intense pressure from the synagogue and the state.
- The Great Resignation: workers and employees realized their discontentment during the pandemic and resigned from their work. Surveys are now showing this has become the “Great Regret”. When the going gets tough, some people give up and quit rather than persist.
 - Many of the Jewish Christians are on the verge of leaving the faith. Here, the author is not denying the reality of the struggle but trying to point them to the hope of their struggle in Jesus...our *anchor*!
- Incarnation: God became man. In the first three chapters of Hebrews, the focus is on the divinity of Jesus. In today’s reading, the focus is the *humanity* of Jesus.
 - This is what distinguishes Christianity from all other religions: other religions are human attempts to reach God...the Gospel is God’s attempt to reach us.
- In this section, Jesus is referred to as the “Great High Priest” (in the spirit of the high priest, Melchizedek).
- The Jews knew what the role of the Great High Priest was: (1) represent the people before God; and (2) represent God before the people. Once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the high priest enters the holy of holies in the Temple and offer a blood sacrifice for his own sins and the sins of the people. This sacrifice is no longer necessary from the death of Jesus.
- The author of Hebrews is exhorting the Jews who were needing encouragement in their faith to pray and to pray boldly! Our prayers must always be *bold* prayers!
- There are no “little prayers”. When we pray big, big things happen. This is not about winning the lottery but about winning the hearts and souls of our people. When we become faithful in prayer, we begin to resemble our High Priest. He knows our need, feels our pain and by His own blood gives us full access to the Father, in our time of need.
- Not only do we have an anchor, we’re called by God’s grace to be an anchor for someone else. We have access, and our witness can give access to someone else in their time of need!

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- How has Jesus been an *anchor* for your life? How have you been an *anchor* for someone else?
- Read Hebrews 4:14-16. When have you felt God's presence in your time of need?
- Read Hebrews 5:1-4.. In what ways does these verses teach about forgiveness and being gentle with those "who are ignorant and going astray"?
- What does it mean for us to have in Jesus Christ a "High Priest"?
- What does Rev. Dr. Chappell mean by *Bold Prayer*? How can we ensure our prayers are bold prayers?
- Hebrews 5:7 describes Jesus' praying and petitioning to God through reverent submission. How can we model our prayer life through that of Jesus? What changes do you need to make to pray like Jesus, and pray boldly?

