



Message **Transcript**

Our Great High Priest

Jeff Schwarzentraub

It's been said in this world, it's not what you know, it's who you know. We say that a lot, and what we mean by that is if you know somebody in a certain environment, they can help you in a certain situation where you wouldn't have otherwise been helped. I started learning that when I was a little boy. I remember going to basketball camp as a sixth grade kid at the University of Illinois. And I got to know one of the assistant coaches there pretty well, we developed a pretty good relationship and I oftentimes went to games, but he told me if I ever came to a game just to get him, and he would take me into the locker room to meet the players and get autographs and do that kind of thing.

So I remember coming down to the place behind the bench and telling the usher, "Hey, I know coach so and so." And he's like, "You don't know him." I'm like, "No, no, you need to go get him." And he wouldn't do anything I was asking. And all of a sudden, the coach noticed me after the game, and he came over and he said to the usher, "He's with me," to which I looked at the usher and was like, "See, told you." He walked me down on the court, we went into the locker room. As a sixth grade kid, I got all the autographs I wanted. And every time I went to a game from then on, if he saw me, he always welcomed me to do that. It wasn't what I knew, it was who I knew.

In life, all of us have situations where there's certain people in certain venues that have come and been our advocate or come to a rescue at some point in time, or they've taken up for us when nobody else was listening and they say, "Oh, I know her. Oh, I know him. You need to listen to what they're saying." And they vouch for us and they help us. When it comes to our life with God, we need an advocate too. We need

one who can speak on our behalf, who can vouch for us, who can be our mediator because he knows us. And this is so important for us when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the father, except through me," he wasn't just mincing words, he was telling the truth, that for those that he knows who know him, he will be an advocate between us and the father. And there's one mediator between God and man, and that's the man, Jesus Christ. As we've been studying the Book of Hebrews, we've been taking a look at about how Jesus Christ is the greatest of all time. He's the greatest prophet, he's the greatest king, he's greater than the angels, he's greater than Moses. And we're going to start taking the look out at how he is the greatest high priest.

Here's been the challenges, I've been reading and studying this passage and this text. I think if I said Jesus is the greatest high priest, for most of us here, we'd be like, "Yes, so what? I never think about a high priest. What is a high priest? Why is Jesus the greatest high priest? And what benefit is it of Jesus being my greatest high priest?" Those are the three questions we want to ask and answer today. And I think if you follow through, you'll see that it is so important that you understand Jesus Christ in his role of high priest in your life. So to do that this morning, I want to look at Hebrews chapter four, starting in verse 14, and we'll read through Hebrews 5:10.

And we'll take a look at the text and then ask that question, what's a high priest and why is Jesus the greatest high priest of all time? And what benefit is Jesus being a

great high priest to me? How can I personally benefit from that? And I think it's important because throughout this book, we've been taking a look, not only how Jesus is so great, but how so many people miss the mark and how so many people stumble and come up short, and how so many people think it's about their good works, or so many people think it's about religious rituals, or so many people have hardened their heart and Jesus Christ is really not the Lord of their life.

So what do they do? This is what the text is going to answer for us today. Read along with me, and then we'll unpack it together. He says in Hebrew 4:14, "Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For 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. 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. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."

"He can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided since himself also is beset with weakness. And because of it, he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins as for the people, so also for himself. And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself so as to become a high priest, but he who said to him, 'You are my son, today I have begotten,' just as he says also in another passage, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" In the days of his flesh, he offered up both prayers and

supplications with loud crying and tears to the one who was able to save him from death. And he was heard because of his piety."

"Although he was a son, he learned obedience from the things which he suffered. And having been made perfect, he became to all those who obey him, the source of eternal salvation being designated by God as high priest, according to the order of Melchizedek." And here in this text, we're going to ask and answer those three questions. What is a high priest? Why is Jesus the great high priest? And what's the benefit to me of Jesus Christ being our great high priest? And the first question we need to ask is what is a high priest? What is a high priest? Today to do this, I'm going to start in chapter five and I'm going through those first 10 verses because they really buttress and support chapter four versus 14, 15 and 16.

That's really the linchpin of all of this, and that's where we're going to end up today, because that's really going to answer for us why, what's the importance of this coming out of the whole understanding of our need for Jesus Christ to be our Lord. That's where we're going to end. But let's start first with what is a high priest. Notice what he says, he says, "For every high priest is taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin." Every Jew knew what a priest was and every Jew knew who the high priest was. So let's just make it really, really, really simple. First thing you need to know is a high priest is always a man.

When God appointed a priest and a high priest, all the priests in the Old Testament were men. God has used women and men. They are both created in the

image of God, male and female, he created them, but you need to understand if you study the priesthood line, the Levitical priesthood, the Aaronic priesthood, you will find that every single priest and high priest is a man. And we need to understand that from when we start asking the question of what makes Jesus Christ our great high priest, because in order to be the high priest, you had to be a man. You had to be a male. And notice what else had to be true. You had to be submitted to God's designated appointment.

It says, "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men." He's appointed. Notice what verse four says, "And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God even as Aaron was." If you go back and study the Old Testament, there's several scriptures in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, which talks about the high priesthood, which talks about the priesthood and how it came through Aaron, Moses' brother. You can look up Exodus 28, Numbers 18, Leviticus 21. Here's also what the high priest needed to do. If they were going to be appointed and designated by God, they needed to be without physical blemish and they needed to have holy conduct.

You remember a couple of Aaron's sons were slain with strange fire. They said they weren't having holy conduct and God killed him. The high priest had to be holy, he needed to be set apart, he needed to look different. And that high priest, even though it came out of the Levitical priesthood, the tribe of the Levites, even though it came from Aaron, all of them were appointed by God. When they were in leadership, it's as if God

was saying, "I'm the one who placed them there." Here's what it means, no young boy in Israel could have woke up and said, "You know, someday, I think I'll be a priest. Maybe even a high priest, I aspire to that."

Now, we live in a generation where we tell kids all the time, you can be whatever you want to be. Don't let anybody stop you. And for the most part, that's a pretty good statement. Now, you really can't be anything you want to be no matter what, but you'll learn that as you age. But the point is we think we can, but if you weren't from the Levitical line and you weren't appointed by God from among men, you couldn't be that high priest. God was the one who called people to it. God is the one who appointed them to it. And notice what else we learn, that this high priest not only was a man and not only was submitted to God's designated appointment and he was set apart. But notice this, he ministered as an intermediary between men and God.

He ministered as an intermediary between man and God. Notice what it says, "He was on behalf of men, the things pertaining to God in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins," which we'll talk about in a minute, "He can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided since he himself is also beset with weakness." He ministered an intermediary. Prophets speak to men for God, priests minister unto God for men. It's a different role. It's a different responsibility. When a prophet stands up and says, "Thus sayeth the Lord," he's saying, "Here's what God said, and you need to hear it as if he's speaking it exactly through me." That was prophet.

A priest was one who ministered on behalf of the people to God, interceded for, prayed for, taught them, lived in such a way where they could model what it looked like

to be set apart. That's what the priest role was. And we'll see his major role here in just a minute. But notice what else, if he's going to minister as an intermediary between man and God, it means that his acts on earth had significance in heaven. What he did as a mediation between the people of Israel and God, what he did on the earth had significance for what took place in heaven. Number four is this, "He genuinely sympathized with the weakness of humanity." God wanted the high priest to genuinely sympathize with the weakness of humanity.

And notice this, he can deal with the ignorant, those are people that don't have the knowledge of God and the misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness. God wanted the high priest to have compassion for people. Religious people do not have compassion for people. Religious don't get the fact that some people just don't have a knowledge of God and that some people even though they do, are misguided in how they live. But God wanted his priest to understand, "Hey, sometimes people aren't going to understand me. And Hey, sometimes even when they do, they're going to do the wrong things. And you need to understand that because you're a sinner too. You're beset with your own weaknesses."

Religious people forget that they're beset with their own weaknesses. Some pastors forget that they're beset with their own weaknesses. Some ministers forget they're beset with their own weaknesses. Sometimes we forget that we're still weak before God and we expect other people to know God and always do what's right, but we don't have the same expectation ourselves. Here's what a priest would do. God's priest were designed so they could lead people into the knowledge of God and tell

people the right things to do, but do it with a sense of compassion and grace, understanding that people won't always do that. It's important for pastors to understand that. I understand that.

I understand that not every single person that comes to BRAVE Churches, 100% of the time, always going to hear God correctly and do exactly what he says. And the reason I know that is because I don't always do that either. That's what he's talking about here. He goes, "We're beset with some of the same weaknesses." And so here's what he wants us to do. He wants us as priests to minister unto God, to intercede for people, to get the knowledge of God, to model for God what it looks like to walk it out. That was the priest job. Now, let's talk about the high priest specifically.

I'll give you a final one. Offered sacrifices on behalf of sinners. Priests always offered sacrifices on behalf of sinners. You remember how the Old Testament was set up? The old covenant was set up? If you sinned or should I say, when you sinned, there needed to be blood that was shed in order for sin to be covered or atoned for. So all the way back in the garden when Adam and Eve sinned and they played hide and go seek with God and they put coverings on themselves, what was the first thing God did for them? He made garments out of what? Skin. Where did the skin come from? An animal. So what happened? An animal had to shed blood for the covering of the sin. Hebrews 9:22 tells us, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin."

So if you read through the Old Testament, you see this extensive treatment on

why animal blood needed to be shed in all order to cover the sins of the people. That's what was going on. Now, why was that so important? Here's why can you imagine living in a world where sin separates you from God? See, the Israelites knew that their sin condition kept them from being around a perfect righteous and holy God. God is perfect, God is righteous, God is holy, God is nothing like you. That's what God told his people. And there's nothing that you can do to get right with me, so therefore, I'm appointing a high priest and priest who are going to offer sacrifices on behalf of your sin so that I can cover over your sin and not have to look at your sin.

Very similarly, when Israel left Egypt, the night before they left, the last plague, what did they have to do? They had to paint blood on the doorpost so that the angel of death could see blood and pass over to keep them alive. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. Israel knew that they had no hope of getting to God. Can you imagine a world like that? I hope you do because you live in it. There's nothing you can do to get right with God. Did you know that? That God is perfect, he's holy, he's righteous, he's good. You can't wake up and say, "I think I'm just going to get right with God today." You can't do it. God is perfect, and God only takes perfect people. That's always been the way.

And so for Israel what he did was he covered over their sins, he never atoned them. They were never cleansed, their sins weren't gone. The guilt and shame was still there, but God used those gallons upon gallons, upon oceans of blood to cover over all the sins of the people until Messiah would come. And the high priest was the only one of the priests who every year on Yom Kippur, which is the day of atonement, on the

10th day of the seven month would enter into what was called the Holy of Holies, either in the tabernacle or eventually in the temple. This was a place that only the high priest could go and only the high priest could go. Once a year.

Jewish tradition tells us there was a curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from where other people could be and other priests could be. Jewish tradition tells us it was about four inch thick curtain, went about 60 feet up in the air, and covered the Holy of Holies. So only the high priest could get through. And when he went and before he went in, he had to offer a sacrifice of blood on behalf of his own sins, and then he took blood in with him to sprinkle it on the mercy seat, which was where the presence of God was to atone for or cover for the people's sins. Because throughout the year, people would send over and over, and over, and over, and over just like in every generation sins.

One thing you'll never see on the news, I'm always surprised at what I'm going to see on the news, but one thing you'll never see on the news, breaking, this generation doesn't sin anymore. That is never going to happen. And so the priest had great job security because the only way that people could relate to God is if their sin was covered. And the only one that could cover sin was a priest. And the only one that could atone for the whole nation was the high priest who went in once a year to atone for the sins of the people. He was God's chosen instrument who ministered as an intermediary between God and men, who genuinely sympathized with the people's weakness, and he offered sacrifices.

It says he offered gifts and sacrifices. And we know that grain offering was a

gift. We know everything else was a blood sacrifice. He offered everything that God required so that the people's sin could be covered. Know how great it is to know that your sins are covered, know how great it is that you know that you can have a relationship with God because he's not holding your sins against you. So what's a high priest. A high priest was God's chosen designated instrument of divine appointment to make sure that the nation's sins could be covered when they sinned. Isn't that an important position? Now, the reason we need to go over that is because for most of us, we're like, "I don't need a high priest. Never had a high priest, never even thought about having a high priest."

Well, you should because if that's what a high priest is then why is Jesus the greatest high priest of all time? What makes Jesus so great? And why do we need to be aware that he's a high priest? Let's keep reading. It says in verse five, "So also Christ did not glorify himself so as to become a high priest, but he who said to him," he's going to quote Psalm 2:7, "You are my son, today I have begotten you. Just as he also says in another passage, which is Psalm 110 verse four, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" Now, here's what you need to understand about Jesus. What makes Jesus the great high priest? First of all, he's a man through the incarnation.

Now, that should make your mouth drop. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, God of God who has always existed, there was never a time that he didn't exist, became a man. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and

the word was God. He spoke the world into existence. Everything you see and don't see was created by Jesus. And what we learn into the New Testament is the word became flesh. And he made his dwelling among us. God became a man. If you ever wondered, what's God like? How would God respond to this? What would God do in this situation? Study the person and life of Jesus and you're seeing God live in a body. That's who our God is.

In order for Jesus to be a high priest, he had to become a man. Now, notice what it says. It says he didn't become a high priest when he did all these wonderful things, but God appointed him as a high priest. Notice, he was submitted to God's designated appointment from eternity past. He said, "You are my son, today I have begotten you." When did Jesus become God's son? He's always been God's son. He's the eternal son of God. He's always existed. And he says, "You are a priest." How long? Forever. Since eternity past till eternity future, that's always been one of your roles, is to be a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Now, we're going to get into Melchizedek in a little bit in case that sounds like a big word, and what are we talking about with Melchizedek? Every Jew would've understood who Melchizedek was. You can go back and read Genesis 14, we're going to flesh it out in the coming weeks. But when Abraham came back from battle, he tied a 10th to Melchizedek who was a priest, the king of righteousness, a king of Salem. We're going to see what that was. But that order of priesthood, the Melchizedek priesthood was a priesthood that was different than the Levitical priesthood. To be in the Levitical priesthood, you had to be born into it and then you died and somebody

else took your place.

This Melchizedek priesthood was somebody who had always been and will always be. And we're going to discover who that is and how that worked. Jesus Christ has always been priest. He's always been the one who is going to fulfill everything that a priest was supposed to do, and he's going to do it perfectly. If we read in Philippians two, of Jesus Christ being found in the flesh as a man, humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore God gave him the name that's above every name. That the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. That's why when he was here, he says, "I only do what I see my father doing, the father and I are one."

It's really interesting because at the end of Jesus Christ's life, what really set the crucifixion in motion was Jesus having to talk with the current high priest. Did you know that? So the high priest of the day was questioning Jesus in Mark chapter 14, right at the very end of Jesus' life before the whole crucifixion series get started. And the high priest is asking Jesus a question, he's saying, "Are you the Christ, the blessed one?" He's asking Jesus, do you think you're God? Do you think you're the promised Messiah who's been promised to come forever and ever? And why were they asking that question? Because the Jews of the day knew that a high priest and that priest could only do so much for them.

They could atone for the sins in order to cover them, but they couldn't cleanse any of them. They weren't washed away. There was a promise that there was a high priest coming that would cleanse them and wash away all their sins. This high priest is

now standing in front of Jesus Christ and he's asking him, "Is that you? Do you think your God? Do you think you can atone for the sins of the world? Do you think you're the promised Messiah, the one the whole Old Testament scriptures testifies about? Are you not going to answer me? Is it really you?" What is Jesus's answer?

I am. I am. And you shall see the son of sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven. I am. And the next time you see me, you'll see me in a position of power and I'll be coming to judge you and all of those like you, who never came to me to be your high priest. Now, how do you think he responded to that? He rips his robe, calls him a blasphemer and the whole crucifixion series begins. Why? Because Jesus Christ claimed he was the great high priest. Jesus Christ claimed he was the one that could atone for the sins of the world. That's why. We see this, yes, I am the Christ. That's why when Jesus ministry, when they were talking to him and they'd say, "Well, Abraham's our father. What do you know about Abraham? You don't know Abraham. You're not even 50 years old yet."

What does Jesus say in John 8:58, "Before Abraham was, I am. I've always been here, I will always be here. You know why? Because I'm God in flesh." Amen. He was God's designated appointment from eternity past. This is love, 1 John four says, "Not that we love God, but that he loved us and gave his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sin." God, the father sent the son to be the savior of the world. He's God's appointed one. Notice what else? Jesus Christ ministered as an intermediary between men and God reverently. Jesus Christ ministered on behalf of people reverently, didn't

he? All throughout Jesus Christ ministry, we see him ministering as a high priest.

Notice what it says, it says, "In the days of his flesh, he offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the one able to save him from death. And he was heard because of his piety. What was one of the ministries of Jesus? What did he do? He prayed, he ministered on behalf of the people that his father gave him, and he was always praying them. And let me tell you something about Jesus prayers, they always come to pass. Do you remember when he selected his 12 disciples in Luke 6:12? That before he selected his apostles, what did he stay up all night doing? He stayed up all night long praying. I think it didn't take him long to hear from his dad as to who they were.

I think once he got the message it was them, he stayed up all night praying. He was constantly praying for his disciples. The night that he was betrayed and Peter told him Jesus, "Even if all other men fall away on account of you, I never will. I'll even die for you." What does Jesus say? "Peter, Satan's desire to sift you like wheat, but I prayed for you. And I'm praying that when you're restored, you'll help your brothers." Were Jesus prayers effective? Yeah. They've always been effective. We see Jesus praying all the time, from the time he's 12, when he heads back to Jerusalem on the way to Galilee and his parents find him in the temple, he said, "Did you not know I had to be in my father's house?"

The only time we ever see him get ticked off royally in the whole New Testament is twice when he flips over the tables of the money changers and all those different things. Because why? Because my father's house was to be called a house of prayer,

but you've turned it into a den of robbers and a den of thieves. You've made it into a marketplace for yourself. This place is to be for God's people, his chosen to seek his face and to hear from him. Jesus constantly prayed. He was reverent in his prayers. You read this, you say, "Well, it seems like one of them didn't get answered because he prayed to the one who was able to save him from death and he heard because of his piety. Well, it doesn't sound like he was heard because Jesus prayed to the one who was able to deliver him from death or save him from death but he died. Was that an answered prayer?"

Let me ask you a question. Is Jesus Christ still dead?

No.

No. What was he praying for? He wasn't praying that he wouldn't die. He came to earth on very purpose that he would die in our place for all our sins. What was he praying about? He was praying to his father saying, "Don't let me stay dead. Get me back up out of the grave once it's been prayed." And because of his reverence, his piety, was he heard? Oh yeah, absolutely. Because on the third day, he got up out of the grave and he's alive as he is ever been. That's our God. That's who he is. He's a great high priest who ministers on our behalf. In John 17, on the night that Jesus is supposed to be betrayed, it's often an overlooked passage on that night. We talk about Jesus washing his disciples feet, and the promise of the Holy Spirit and all those things.

But if you read John 17, it's oftentimes called the high priestly prayer of Jesus,

where he's ministering to his dad on behalf of his disciples and future disciples. I just want to read a section of that for you today so you can hear how he was praying that night for his current disciples and for you. In John chapter 17:13, he says to his dad, "But now I come to you and these things I speak in the world so that they may have my joy made full in themselves." Jesus wanted us to have joy, the joy of him. He says in verse 14, "I have given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world."

He says, for those who are truly his disciples, who claim him as Lord, "This is not your home. This is not your world. You don't belong to this world. You're a temporary visitor here. You're a Sojourner here. Your life here is but a vapor. You're on mission here, that's why you're here." And that's what he was praying. He was saying, "Dad, they're no more part of this world than I was, and the world hates them because they're not really part of the world. And the world hates them because they're not going to get tied up in all the world systems. And they're not going to care about everything that the world cares about." What's he going on to say? I love this verse sometimes, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one."

Has life ever gotten so hard for you that you're like, "Lord, just take me home. Lord, I look at the news, I look at what I see. Just get us out of here soon." Here's how Jesus prayed, "Dad, don't get him out, just protect them while they're there. They're going to go through hard things, but protect them from the evil one. Don't let the evil one be the one that takes them out, protect them from his evil, but don't take

them out of the world. We need them in the world." We're going to find out why here in just a second. He says, again, "They're not of the world even as I am not of the world." He says, "Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth."

What was one of Jesus's prayers for his disciples? Make them holy, set them apart. Make them look different than the rest of the people that they hang out with. Do you know it's one of Jesus Christ prayers for you? It's totally his prayer for you. He says then this, "As you sent me into the world, I have also sent them into the world." Was Jesus Christ here on divine mission? Guess what, So are you. In the same way God sent Jesus, so he's sending you. That's why Jesus says at the end of Matthews Gospel, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, you go. You have the same appointment that the son of God had when he was here. You have the same type of purpose."

Jesus purpose was greater, he died for all of our sins. You're not going to do that for anybody else, but in terms of mission, you're all on mission. Can I tell you that's why I don't like the word missions often and how it's used in church. Sometimes we use the word missions to describe that rare few in the church that want to do something cross-culturally and risky. That's not missions. If you're a Christian, you're on mission. You may work in different places, you may have different vocation, but you're all on mission to love the Lord Jesus Christ, to serve him only, and to be a witness for him here on the planet no matter who you are or where you go. Everybody's on mission.

Well, how do you know that? Because Jesus prayed to his dad that you would

be. And then he commissioned all of us, not some of us to go. He didn't say, "All authority and heaven on earth has been given to me. Therefore, if you get really fired up in a service and you can't find anything else to do with your life and you're miserable and you're poor, ask people in church to support you to go overseas and do something fun for two weeks." I'm not putting down short term mission trips, I'm for them, I've been on them. What I am against is to people that don't think they're on mission when they're in the kingdom of God. All of you are on mission.

He was praying for his disciples. And notice what he prays again, "For their sakes, I sanctify myself that they themselves may be sanctified in the truth." That's the second time he's talked about sanctification. What's that mean? That's holiness. Through the shed blood of Christ, you've already been declared holy, it's who you are. And then guess what God wants to do for the rest of your life? He wants to make you more holy. He wants to set you apart even more. If you've been a Christian for a while, you will feel promptings from the Holy Spirit for you to leave certain behaviors and sins you used to have and to walk in a different way.

And when God begins to show you, because it'll start with really small things that don't seem significant, you'll begin to ask this, why? Why do I have to do that? How come they can do that? It doesn't matter. God loves you enough to show you that who you are while he loves you, where you're at, he loves you even more to not keep you there. He's trying to grow you more wholly, to set you apart so that you look different than what you did when you first got saved. Do you look different now than you did five

years ago or 10 years ago, or 30 years ago? God's trying to sanctify you, he's trying to grow you. The Bible says, "Delight in the Lord. He'll give you the desires of your heart." I used to think that meant, "God, here's all the desires in my heart, if I walk with you, give me everything I'm asking for."

Now, I know what that verse means, "Lord, I want to delight in whatever you want and I want to be whoever you want me to be, and I want to reject the things you reject, and I want to love the things you love, and I want to walk your way. And I know if I do those things, I will delight in you and my heart will be filled." That's what it means. I know I'm a different person now than I was 30 years ago. 30 years ago, sport for me was more than just something that you do every now and again, it was a life. As a little kid, I remember shooting baskets before and after school. I remember throwing the football with anybody that would come near me. And if I couldn't find somebody, I would stand across the street and try to make baskets in the basketball hoop with a football and drop back and throw it.

I played baseball with myself against the garage. It was constant. That's all I ever did. It wasn't a way of things, it was life. And I lived in an era in the '70s and the '80s where you played about 10 games of baseball in the summer. But if we would've had things like now where you played 70 games in the summer, I would've been all in on that. That was my life. Just to fast forward a little bit, when I got married to my wife, I was coaching freshman football at the high school I graduated from and I loved every minute of it. And I had a ball doing it. And I remember on a Friday night, one time the varsity was playing three hours away, so I got on the bus and went, my wife got in

a car with my parents and drove down because she was going to be supportive, drove three hours to the game.

She watched me coach that game from the sidelines, we got on the bus, she got in the car, drove three hours back. We got home at like midnight. I got up at 5:00 the next morning to go coach my freshman game, which she came to at eight o'clock. After the eight o'clock game, I stayed for the sophomore game, which went till noon. After that, we all jumped in a car and drove down to the University of Illinois to watch that game. When we got home that night, and I remember this like it was yesterday, it was just before seven o'clock and wouldn't you know, the Ohio State and Texas were just coming on as the game of the week.

And I remember, I looked at my wife and I said, "Can you believe the timing?" I'm like, "I can't believe it." She's like, "I am not watching another football game this weekend." And I said, "Well, what about the NFL games tomorrow?" And I didn't think there was anything wrong with that. And she went and did something else, watched a movie, I watched the game and the next day I got up and watched sports all day. That's what I did. Thinking that was "normal." I've changed. There's the NCAA Basketball Tournament going on right now. I've seen one game. I don't care. Listen, listen, my alma mater's playing right now. I don't care.

What difference does it make? You know what is changing my heart? That there's millions of people in our city that are going to hell and nobody telling them about it. That burdens me. That's now my passion. Well, who changed my passion? God did. I was talking to my little brother about this last night who the only thing he knows about

basketball is that the ball's the same color as his hair. And we've been having this conversation for years and he's like, "Bro, you're way too into this." And I was telling him last night, he's like, "My prayers have finally been answered." But that's what Jesus is doing. He's praying for you to grow in your sanctification because he knows if you do, that's where your heart is going to align.

Now, hear me, I'm not against sports, I'm for them. I still enjoy watching them from time to time. I enjoy watching them with people from time to time. I understand the game. So it's a way for me to go and relax and I'll still watch the Broncos play this fall. And I know I'll enjoy it, but it's not my life passion anymore. It's not what drives me anymore. It's not who I am anymore. But it was once upon a time, I promise you. Jesus ministered as an intermediary between men and God. Now, how did Jesus do that? How did Jesus do that? Well, he's in heaven right now. Do you know one of the ministries that Jesus Christ is doing right now? Because for many of us, we think he's like sitting on the throne with his feet up, maybe drinking a Pepsi or something like that, looking at the world.

Can I just tell you what he's doing? He's interceding for you. If you're a believer, he's praying for you. Hebrew 7:25 says it like this, "Therefore he is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them." Always. You woke up this morning, you checked the weather, you got in your car, you drove here, you know what Jesus was doing for you? He was praying for you. He was talking to his father on behalf of you for what you needed. This

is not the only place in scripture that says that, in Romans 8:34, we read it like this, "Christ Jesus is he who died, yes rather he who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

One of the current ministries of Jesus Christ in heaven is he's praying for you, he's interceding for you. He's telling his father exactly what you need. You pray to him, he is taking what he hears and he is like, "Yeah, I know what to do with that." And he is bringing it before his father so that he can craft what is needed for you. That's why Jesus is the great high priest. Let me tell you something else. He does, he genuinely sympathized and still does with the weakness of humanity perfectly, perfectly. Notice this, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from the things in which he suffered."

Now, this is a powerful verse. Most of us think the way we learn is by doing something wrong and then being disciplined. And for some of you, that's the way you're always going to learn. It's unfortunate, but you don't have to learn that way. Jesus Christ always God, always perfect, put on flesh. And what did he do? How did he learn to be obedient? Through what he suffered. Now, you're not going to like this, because I don't always like this. I rarely like this. I may even say I never like this. Suffering comes into your life because God is trying to teach you obedience. The things that you're suffering now are there for the Lord to use for his glory and for your good.

And suffering means this, just real simple, you wouldn't have chose it, you wouldn't have picked it, you wouldn't say, "This is what I want." Sometimes when we suffer, we wonder, "Why don't they have to deal with that, and why do I have to deal

with it like this?" If you have a health crisis, you look at somebody else that has a money crisis and you say, "Man, I'd do anything to have a money crisis because right now I only got four weeks to live." And if you have a money crisis and you see somebody else has a marriage crisis, you're like, "Man, I'd deal with that marriage. We could put that thing together, but this money crisis is killing me." If you got a marriage crisis and you look at somebody else that has a crisis at work, you're like, "Man, I'll take that crisis at work over this marriage thing. It's killing me."

Whatever you're suffering is, you're always going to wish you are suffering like somebody else. But the suffering that you have is what God's to teaching you to be obedient to him so that when you're suffering, you say things like this, "Lord, I don't like what I'm going through right now, but I believe you're sovereign and Lord, this is super painful. So Lord, I'm just telling you, help me learn whatever it is that I need to learn in this season so that it can be over as quickly as possible." And then usually when we get through those seasons, we say something like this, "You know, I hated what I went through, but I've never been closer to the Lord than when I went through that. But Lord don't ever do that again."

When did Jesus Christ sufferings end? When he died on the cross. They got progressively worse. Christians, you're not doing anything wrong. If you're suffering, if you're doing good and you're suffering for the Lord, it's a blessing for him to grow you in your obedience to him. We don't like that. We don't even want to mouth the word amen to that. If I mouth the word amen, maybe God is going to make me suffer. You will suffer in this world. There's just tribulation in this world everywhere, but Jesus is

using that to grow you. And he grew in his obedience even though he was perfect. And notice verse nine, "And having been made perfect." Well, wait a second, I thought Jesus already was perfect, how did he become perfect?

As the God-man, he'd always been perfect, but what became perfect? What became perfect was his sacrifice that he was going to put on the cross, because in order for him to be the perfect sacrifice, he needed to fulfill the law through his life. In order for him to be the perfect sacrifice, he couldn't have sinned even when he was tempted. In order to be the perfect sacrifice, he needed to lay down his life, knowing that he'd accomplished everything that God wanted him to do. So yeah, he was perfect from the eternity past and he was perfect from the time he was born, but he became perfect when he lived out that perfection to a place where when he went to the cross, he saying, "Dad, I've done everything you've asked me to do. I've never come up short one time. I'm the only one that can offer this perfect sacrifice to you for the sin of humanity." That's how he became perfect.

That's why there is no other God, but Jesus, because there's nobody else that can offer a sacrifice that's satisfactory to God. He genuinely sympathized with the weaknesses of humanity. In order to understand men, he became a man. In order to understand what you're going through, he's lived in the flesh. He's seen life through real eyes. He's touched, he's done everything that you have, yet he's without sin, which we'll see. And let me tell you why this is so important when Jesus is praying for us to be sanctified in the truth. Why is this so important? Because there's a lot of Christians

that falsely think, "Hey, if I just out with non-believers, maybe that'll go well for me. Maybe I can be an evangelist."

"They get drunk, I don't get drunk. I just drink a little with them. They get high, I don't get high, but I'm with them when they're getting high. They're immoral, they sleep around, I don't sleep around. I watch things that I shouldn't, but just so I can be cool with them." Friends, bad company corrupts good morals. Your witness for Jesus is impaired through sin. People that say, "Well, I just need to sin, hope people come to Christ." Stupid. It doesn't work. You're more like them than they are like Christ. And I'm saying stupid because I've been stupid, where I used to think, "Well, if I hang out with people like this and if I don't hang out with them, who's going to hang out with them?"

Here's what I discovered, when I just walked with the Lord and walked away from them, many of them wanted what I currently then had, and those who didn't became more vocal about the fact they didn't want what I had. If you walk in holiness, God will use you as a witness. If you don't walk in holiness, he's not using you to the full that he wants to use you as. God wants you to be separate, God wants you to be used for his purpose. He wants you to be set apart and be holy for him. That's God's purpose in your life. That's why Jesus is praying, sanctify them in the truth. Then he says this, "I do not ask on my behalf of these things alone," back in John 17, "But for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one even as you are in me and I am in you, that they may also be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me."

He says, "I'm not asking for these alone. I'm not asking for my 11 apostles. I'm

asking for everyone who's going to believe in them." Who's he asking for? Who is Jesus praying for in the night he was betrayed? Oh, he was praying for you then. He was praying that you would be used on mission for him then. And what was his mission? That in the church, that those of us who have named Jesus Christ Lord would have a unity that the world would have to take notice of, that regardless of gender or socioeconomic background, or skin color, or worship preference and style, or anything else, that because Jesus Christ is Lord, and we love him, and we love one another that the world looks on and they can't figure out what is the unique thing that holds all these people together where they're all united even though they're all so different?

And we would say, "That's Jesus. That's the gospel. We love God and we love each other because of what he did for us." That's what makes Jesus Christ the great high priest. And then notice this last one is most powerful, Jesus offered a once-for-all sacrifice on the cross for sinners. He offered a once-for-all sacrifice on the cross for sinners. Notice what it says in this text, "And having been made perfect, he became to all those who obey him, the source of each eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest. According to the order of Melchizedek." That's the eternal order of priests, which we'll talk about here in a couple weeks. He became the source of eternal salvation. How?

By dying once for all. 1 Peter 3:18, spells it out like this, 1 Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust so that he might bring us to God having been put to death in the flesh, but being made alive in the spirit." Think about this. If you were a Jew and you knew you sin and you had guilt and you had to

go to the priest and you had to say, "Oh, not only did I sin, here was my sin, and here's an animal and slaughter him for me." And once a year, you were waiting on the high priest to be able to go atone for all the sins of the whole nation so that God could cover those over. But one time for all, when Jesus Christ died on the cross, what happened? He eternally paid for all the sins for those who believe in him. All.

Well, wait a second. Well, how many times does he have to do that? Never again. Now, think about this. Remember that temple curtain that was four inches thick and 60 feet high? Remember what happened to that when Jesus Christ died on the cross? Matthew 27:50 says this, "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn into from top to bottom, and the earth shook and the rocks were split." So what happens when Jesus cries out his last breath, "Father into your hands, I commit my spirit." And he lays down his life and dies for the sins of the world, taking on the full measure of his father's wrath. What happens?

The Holy of Holies, that curtain temple, it didn't rip from bottom to top. It wasn't a snag in the curtain, it wasn't a snag in the veil that unraveled because some kid wandered in and pulled on it. No, it tore from top to bottom immediately. Why? Because through Jesus Christ, now all of those who didn't have access to the holiness of God, through Christ have complete access to the fullness of at all times. That's why Jesus Christ is the greatest sacrifice. Just a little foreshadowing we hear from Hebrews 10, which we'll get to in a few weeks . In Hebrews 10, starting in verse 11,

he says, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which never can take away sin, but he, Jesus having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until his enemies be made a foot stool for his feet for by one offering, he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."

Here's why Jesus is the greatest high priest because his offering of his blood on that cross took care of everything that you'd ever need to have access to God. And there's no other way to God except through that. You say, "Well, Jeff, that eliminates pretty much every other religion in the world." No, it eliminates every other religion in the world. Not pretty much anything. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the father except through him. He's the only high priest that can mediate on your behalf. So if a high priest is God's appointed man to cover the sins of the nation, then Jesus Christ is God's appointed son who didn't just cover sin, friends, he cleansed it.

You can be free from sin because of who you are in Jesus. God made him who had no sin to become sin for us so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God. What is a high priest? God's chosen man. Why is Jesus the greatest high priest? We just explained it. Now, here's the question. What's the benefit for you? Okay, so what? What's the benefit for me? Take your eyes back to Hebrews chapter four, starting verse 14, now, that you know all this, now that you may not have Jesus Christ as Lord, here's what you need to know, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus Christ, the son of God, let us hold fast our

confession.

That should make your mouth drop. Where's Jesus now? He passed through the heavens. For the Greek, there were three heavens. There was the stars that you can see, there was everything in the universe that was a second heaven beyond that. And then beyond anything else, that's a dwelling place of God, the third heaven. When Paul says, "I was caught up in the third heaven,": that's what he's talking about. Where is Jesus our high priest ministering now? Where is he making intercession for us? Where did he make a sacrifice? In the old covenant and in the Old Testament, it was a priest that were on earth that were interceding to God in heaven. Where's Jesus right now? He's at the right hand of his father in all power. He's interceding from heaven, from a place of victory to his father for us on our behalf.

What does that tell us? We have a victorious high priest. He accomplished everything that he came to do. That's who he is. So he says this, "For 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." Is that cool or what? God doesn't understand me, I'm the only person that struggles with this. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man." If you're struggling with a temptation, you are not the only one in this church struggling with that temptation. There's a lot of other people struggling with the same temptation.

Jesus would go so far to say, "I was tempted that way, but I never sinned because I'm God, but I understand why you're being tempted and I understand how the temptation comes, because I dealt with every single temptation that you have, yet I

never sinned." Not only does that show us that Jesus Christ is glorious and victorious, but it tells me this. It means that if he was victorious over that, and he's the one making intercession for us, guess what? You can be over your sin too. You can have victory over your sin. It means you can't say, "Well, this is just the way I was made, this is just the way my family was. I guess it's not going to work out for me." No. No, no, no, your God, your high priest was tempted in every way you are, yet he didn't sin, therefore, you don't need to sin either.

There's always a way out. He'll provide that way out if you want it. He's always there for you. He's a mediating high priest. That's why the Bible says in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one mediator between God and man, the man, Jesus Christ." You don't need to pray through saints, or angels, or Mary, or a priest, you can go directly to God through Jesus Christ no matter who you are. And when you go, isn't it good to know that Jesus won't drop his mouth and say, "Really you struggle with that? You're tempted by those things?" Here's what he'd say, "I know exactly what that temptation feels like, because I'm the God-man and I came so I'd understand what you're being tempted with."

Which leads us to the verse 16 which I love, "Therefore," because this is who our high priest is, here's how we're bringing all this to close, "Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need." What's that mean? What's the benefit of knowing Jesus Christ as being our high priest? It means that he is our mediator in heaven, praying for

you to boldly come now and receive from him. What do you need? And you can really sum up everything you need in two words, mercy and grace. For some of you, you're here today and you didn't even want to come today because you're thinking about all your sin and how it's so great. And even though you've tried and even though you've committed, it's not working out and you're praying harder and you're trying harder, but it's not working.

Let me just save you the time, it's never going to work. And you're not boldly coming to Jesus because you're afraid of what he's going to say, and he's going to shame you and make you feel bad and all these different, no, no. He'll extend mercy. Mercy means, no, no, I'm just giving you compassion. All of us love the story of the prodigal son, don't we? There were really two prodigal sons, one stayed at home and one went far away, but we're familiar with the younger son who took all of his dad's inheritance, went to a distant land, squandered it all in wild living. And now he's sloping the hogs and he's like, "Hey, I'd rather be a slave in my dad's house than be out here sloping pigs, at least I'll eat."

So he gets this whole excuse ready, where he is going to repent and turn and go back to his father and say, "I've sinned against heaven and against you. I'm no longer worthy. To be called your son, make me a slave." But what happens when he is on his way home, when he's boldly coming back? He sees his father sprinting at him. To dispense what? Mercy and grace. As he's going through his whole story, what does his father do? His father was just hugging him and kissing him. His father's giving him all the mercy in the world. He son's like, "I don't deserve this." He's like, "That's what I

give, I give what you don't deserve."

"And oh, by the way, quick, bring the best robe, put a ring on his finger, sandals on his feet. This son of mine was lost and he's found. He was dead, he's alive. Let's have a party. I'm going to give you grace. You want to coming home as my slave, you're home as my son." And we hear that story and we say, "I love that story." Who's the son in the story? It's you. God wants you to know what the father's like that when you need his mercy and grace, come running. Don't we see that all throughout the New Testament? We see the woman at the well, the woman that had five husbands and the man she's living with is now not her husband. And she says, "How can you ask me for a drink? You're a Jew and me a Samaritan." Jesus's like, "If you knew who I was, you'd ask me for a drink. I'd give you living water and you'd never be thirsty again."

She's like, "Well, tell me where that is. I don't know about religion very much, but I know when the Messiah comes, he's going to tell us all." And Jesus says, "I am. I'm what you've been looking for." She gets so excited about receiving him. She goes back and tells the whole village and brings them. And Jesus extends mercy and grace to them. We talked about Zacchaeus, the white-collared criminal last week who when Jesus gave him mercy and grace gave away half his possessions to the poor and four times toward anybody he had robbed. You see the woman caught in adultery, where Jesus kneels down and starts drawing in the sand and asked the woman who deserved to be stoned, "Woman, where are your accusers? She said, "They're all gone." He goes, "I don't accuse you either. Now, go and sin no more."

Jesus was always extending mercy and grace to hurtful people and prideful

people. Remember the story about Peter? The time that they had been fishing all night, Jesus was using his boat and told Peter, "Hey Peter, why don't you go put out for a catch?" And Peter's like, "Lord, we've been fishing all night and have caught nothing. And oh, by the way," here's Peter's attitude, "I'm a fisherman, you're a rabbi. I know how to fish., you know how to teach? We know what we're doing. There's no fish that are going to bite during the day." Have you ever noticed how the disciples never caught any fish apart from Jesus? It's just interesting.

But Peter says, "Lord, because you tell me I'll do it." So he goes and puts his net down, and what happens? All the fish are jumping in the net. And while all this is happening, Peter's looking at the Lord and he's saying, "Lord, go away from me, I'm a sinful man. I didn't know you could do all thing. I didn't know that's who you were. I didn't know you were merciful and kind and great. Lord, get away from me." He say, "No, Peter." He goes, "Hey, from now on, we're going to fish, but we're going to fish for men. I got a bigger job for you than you ever knew." What do you need from the Lord? Why are you in church today? Why are you watching online? Why are you listening on the radio? Why? Could it be that you're looking for mercy and grace? Could it be you want to hear the Lord say you're forgiven?

Could it be that you want to know that you no longer have to live in shame? Could it be that God has the power to release you from your sin? Is that why you're here? Because I'm telling you, come now because he wants to give you all of that. To be in a service with the Lord and then to leave with guilt and shame in your life is to miss the

entire reason why you were here in the first place. He wants to extend his mercy and grace to you. He wants you to leave a fresh. One of my favorite chapters in the Bible is Luke 16. And the reason I love it so much is it has nothing to do with the prodigal son anymore. We don't read about the father saying, "Okay, now that you're back and we had the party, you and I need to have a little talk. Do you know how much money you took from me? Do you know how hard that's been for your mother and I? Do you know what you're going to need to do to work all that off?"

Do you know why that chapter's not in the Bible? Because that's not what God does. When you come home, you come home as a son or daughter and you are welcomed without shame and without guilt, and new hope, and new life. And he loves you, he loves you, he loves you. What keeps you from coming? Let me just save you a little time. I know I'm going long, but I'm going to save you a little time. Some of you come to church and you hear the word and you say to the Lord when you're hearing that, "Lord, I commit from now on, I'm going to change." Your commitment will not work. It may not work till you get to the car. It certainly won't work by the time you get to your house. In a week from now you'll be saying, "Yeah, it didn't work this week."

Let me be real clear. Some of you are singles who are living in immorality, shacking up, who'd tell the Lord, "This is the last time I'm ever doing that. I'll never do that again. I know better this time. I'm going to commit this time." Stop committing and receive his mercy and grace, and tell him, "I can't change who I am, but I need you Lord, and I need your power to help me. And I need to know that I'm forgiven and loved so I don't try to find it somewhere else." Some of you who are married, you need

to stop committing. You need to stop committing about the person you're going to be or committing that you're going to try to change your spouse because neither works. And what you need to do is say, "Lord, my marriage isn't working and I can't change my spouse, but I know you can change me. Lord, give me mercy to become the person you want me to be. Be merciful to our marriage and give me the grace and power that I need to do that."

Some of you struggle over and over in relationship, some of you struggle with alcohol, some struggle with drugs, some struggle with these things, but instead of receiving mercy and knowing that God loves you right now, where you are, and instead of receiving his power to go live a new life, you're still trying to live the Christian life on your own and wondering why you're so miserable and everybody else is happy. From this sermon, this message today is not so that you can walk out of here and go and impress your friends with what a high priest is. This message is so you can experience the greatest high priest of all time. This message is so that you can experience his mercy and grace and say, "Lord, I know I'm a sinner, but I believe you died for me and rose, and I want you to be the Lord of my life."

Some of you need to give your life to Christ today. Some of you that have done that and know that Jesus is the Lord of your life would say as the Holy Spirit spoken to you, "Yeah, you're the Lord of my life, but you're really not the Lord in this area. And I've never let you, and I'm still trying to hang on and I'm still trying to change it, Lord. I relinquish all of that to you today. You have every area of my life. Take my life and let me be consecrated to you. Lord, help me. Help me. Help me." Jesus Christ is alive,

Jesus Christ is here, Jesus Christ is available. I'm just going to invite you to stand in this moment. I want to let you know, as we sing this last song to the glory of God, if you need to leave, I know you need to leave, I'm not judging you, but I'm saying, don't leave if you don't have to.

Remain here, let the Lord do a work in your life. Our altar will be open. Some of our elders and pastors will be down front, people that'd love to pray with you, maybe you want to pray alone and by yourself, maybe you want to pray to let the Lord do a work in your life, but don't walk out of this place saying, "Yeah, I got this thing." Let the Lord minister to your spirit. Our God is the great I am. He wants to set you free today from the penalty and the power of your sin and let you walk in a new way with him.

Father in heaven, we give you all the praise and glory and honor for who you are. Lord, you are our great eternal high priest. We thank you that you intercede for us. Lord, do a work here today in this service. Lord set us free from shame, and guilt, and depression, and despair, and all these other things we've been trying to get over. And Lord, minister to our soul right now. Lord, we give you all the glory, we give you all the honor, we give you all the praise. In Jesus name. Amen and Amen. Can we give God praise this morning for who he is?