

Jesus: Our Superior Mediator

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 February 2016

Preacher: Graeme Shanks

[0 : 00] Well, thank you, Ian, and good morning, everyone. And thank you to everyone who's contributed so far to our service. I think I've got three of the five. Will it float or will it sink, right?

Probably asking that about the sermon as well. But it's with confidence that we turn to God's word now. So can I ask you to turn back to Hebrews chapter 8? And on your way in, you should have received a sermon outline.

Now that's going to be really helpful this morning for following along with where we're going. If you've not got one of them and if you stick up your hand, and I've assigned somebody to hand them out.

So just keep your hand out and we'll hand it up and we'll get one to you. But why don't we pray as we start and just commit this time to the Lord together. Our gracious Father, King, Lord and Saviour, as we turn to your living word now, we ask that you would help us to see the greatness of your son Jesus.

And would your spirit help us to treasure him, what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do.

[1 : 11] So help us in this time to love and appreciate him more. And so we pray in his worthy and precious name. Amen. So let me address the boyfriends and the husbands in the room this morning.

Who can tell me what last Sunday was? It was Valentine's Day. Put your hands up if you remembered Valentine's Day. Okay, this is the male of the species here.

Hands up if you remembered Valentine's Day. Okay, so we're doing okay. Put your hands up. Now, with the very best of intentions, that actually you kind of forgot about Valentine's Day.

Okay? It's my confession. So I'm going to use this public forum to make up for it. I love my wife. She, I know, I know. She's my best friend. She makes me laugh.

She makes me smile. And I really miss it when she's not around. Really miss her. In fact, her and Chloe, they went away for a week over Christmas. And I found it incredibly hard.

[2 : 16] And at my desk, I brought it with me. I've got this picture of her. And I looked at it an awful lot when she was away. Because I missed her. But here's what I want you to imagine this morning.

When we were reunited with one another. When we saw one another again. What would you say to me if I completely ignored Alex and I was hugging that picture? Picture the scene.

Okay, in your head. We get into the car. And instead of her sitting in the front seat, I tell her to get in the back. Because the picture's in the front seat. And it needs a seatbelt. We get out of the car. And instead of holding her hand as we walk down the road.

I'm holding the picture in my hand. And she's walking five steps behind. And then it's time for lights out. And instead of giving her a goodnight kiss. I actually give the picture a goodnight kiss.

And Alex gets the cold shoulder as I'm hugging the picture. It's pretty strange behavior. I hope you would out me on that. Pretty strange behavior. Isn't it crazy to miss the person?

[3 : 15] Because you're hung up in the picture. Isn't it ludicrous? What a tragedy to have the reality right in front of you. And yet you choose to go on with the thing that's pointing to the reality.

For you see, I think that is what Hebrews 8 is all about this morning. Now remember, we've seen this as we've journeyed through Hebrews 8 so far. This series, Out of the Shadows.

The people that this letter is written to, it's decision time for them. Are they going to go on with Jesus in their lives? Or are they going to turn back to their old way of life?

Probably a lot easier for them. And their old Jewish religious systems. What's the decision going to be? Now I think what we need to appreciate is that in our heads, that's probably a no-brainer.

Isn't it? It's probably a no-brainer. But to appreciate that for these people, that is a serious decision that they're weighing up in their minds. And if truth be told, if we were to ask them, their old way of life is probably a lot more appealing.

[4 : 20] It's a lot more appealing than going on with Jesus. Now we have to ask ourselves, why is that more appealing? Well, picture, imagine you're a Christian in this church.

You're a new Christian. You've most likely left a former way of Jewish life to become a Christian. The Jewish way of life has, as part of its practice, a vast and impressive temple. It's got loud and beautiful singing. It's got altars. It's got bells and smells. It's got a lot of it. And it's got grand processions. And into the bargain, you've left the place where your mum and dad used to worship.

Where they probably still do worship. Where their mum and dad used to worship. Where their mum and dad used to worship. In fact, you're the first in your family to become a Christian. And most of all, see, this Jewish way of religious life, they've got a physical priest.

A physical priest who you can physically see go into a physical temple and who you know is making a physical sacrifice for your sin. And it's a real peace of mind that comes with that.

[5 : 33] And you've left that all behind. And what have you left it behind for? For what? Well, now what are you doing? You're meeting in somebody's front room. Because there's far fewer of you now. You're singing songs with these people.

And none of you can hit a note. You've left something really impressive for something seriously unimpressive. And you're focusing your minds and worship on this Jesus guy. And where is he? Sure, you know stuff about him. You've heard stories about him. But you can't see him. And so come the taunting questions from your friends and family. Where is your priest, Mr. Christian?

Where is your minister, Mrs. Christian? Where is the guy who offers sacrifices for your sin and makes you right with God? We've got one. Where's yours?

What are you doing, you fools? I'm sure that is the pressure and the line of questioning you're facing from your friends and family if you're a young Christian in this church.

[6 : 34] Now let me just pause here and ask you this morning. Have you ever felt a bit of a fool for living your life for Jesus? Have you ever felt in your own faith that actually this, what we do here, is something quite unimpressive when we compare it with the impressiveness of the world out there?

Do you not sometimes feel that in your faith that people outside look in and they say, You fool. What are you doing? You worship a guy who got crucified on a cross. You don't see him.

What are you doing? See, actually, when we begin to say it like that, these Christians aren't a million miles away from us, are they? It's the line of attack. Where is your priest?

Well, Mr. Hebrews, anticipating that objection from outside and anticipating that doubt inside the mind of his readers, he breaks in at verse 1.

Look at verse 1. Where is this Jesus? Well, he's in heaven. He's not on earth. He's a great high priest who is ministering right in the heart of heaven.

[7 : 43] He is one who's ministering at God's right hand. And what's he doing there? Well, he's there forever serving on your behalf. He's there permanently interceding for you.

That's where he is. And the big idea of this morning from this passage, I think, is that Mr. Hebrews is trying to get them to see that Jesus brings the Christian into and secures for them a far more beautiful and glorious relationship with God.

And the question we're going to try and get our heads around this morning is this. How does he do that? Now, one of my favorite shows growing up on TV was Catchphrase.

Anyone else watch Catchphrase? Right? Roy Walker. What was his line? Anyone? Just going to say what you see. Say what you see. So this is what I did in my preparation this week. I took Hebrews 8 and I just heard Roy Walker in my head.

Say what you see. And I look at Hebrews 8 and I'm just going to say what I see. I see the word covenant cropping up eight times in 13 verses.

[8 : 49] Therefore, I conclude, I deduce, that Mr. Hebrews wants his readers to understand something to do with covenant. And you'll notice at verse 7 that he's speaking about an old covenant and he is speaking about a new covenant.

And he's going to contrast the two. You see, like our opening illustration, one's a shadow, one's a reality. Now, what is a covenant? You're probably asking. Well, a really simple definition of a

covenant is that it's a committed relationship based on promises. It's a committed relationship based on promises. The best way to understand what a covenant is, it's like a marriage. It's a committed relationship based on promises. And that covenant relationship is the one that describes the relationship that God has with his people. You see a description of the old covenant at verse 9. God had rescued his people from Egypt. And God had committed himself to his people. And he asked his people to commit themselves to him. That he is their God and they are to be his people.

[9 : 58] That's the strapline of the old covenant. And as his people, God gave his people laws to live by. And as long as they live by them, then God will bless them. And this is a gracious and this is a glorious covenant.

But the question is, how did that covenant go? Well, see verse 9. God was faithful to his side. But the people were not faithful to theirs. Instead, they go whoring after other gods. They commit spiritual adultery on God. And God gives his verdict on his people's behavior at verse 8. Just look at it there. Verse 8. He finds them at fault. He finds them at fault. Now the question that we've got to get our heads around is, why does he find them at fault? Well, this is where your sermon outline is going to come in real handy. There's three problems with the old covenant. Three fundamental problems with the people under the old covenant.

[10 : 58] First problem is to do the sacrifice. It's funny. One of the things that I've really noticed since having a little girl in our house. We don't have a dishwasher. So the amount of dishes that we're having to do at the minute is unbelievable. You make your breakfast. Breakfast. You've got those breakfast dishes to wash up. You have your breakfast. Then you realize there's banana all over the floor. You're trying to clean that up. You try and clean up your breakfast dishes. Then you come to lunch. You make your lunch. You've got the dishes there. You have your lunch. Then you have to clean up your lunch dishes. You get that cleared up. You come to dinner time. You make the dinner. You have to clean up the preparation of dinner dishes. You have your dinner. Then you have to clean up the dinner dishes. And the whole cycle goes around again and again. Does anyone else feel that? I just need to get a dishwasher really, don't we? Why is there always dishes need and done in our house? Answer. Because there's always mess.

[11 : 56] There's always eating going on. There's always mess. And likewise. Why are priests continually making sacrifices under this old covenant? Answer. Because there's constantly sin needing dealt with. Constantly. You think about it. You're a priest. You make the sacrifice. And the people have gone and sinned all over again. They make another sacrifice. Then they go and sin all over again. This constant cycle. You see, God is holy. He is radiantly pure and perfect. And he cannot tolerate sin. And for people to live in relationship with a holy God, well, they themselves need to be holy. And the old covenant, God's provided a sacrificial system in order that the people be made right with God. These sacrifices are offered by the priests. But for the priests that offer that perfect, once and for all sacrifice, impossible. It's impossible. You flick over a couple of chapters.

[12 : 57] Chapter 10 into verse 4. You'll see the author declare that it is impossible. That's the word he uses. Impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. It's impossible. You see, the priest could never fully atone for people's sin. And therefore, the sin problem was never fully taken away by these sacrifices. That's why under the old covenant, a priest's work like those dishes. It's never, never done. A never-ending sin cycle. Fault one. An impossible sacrifice. Fault two was to do with obedience. That people's obedience to this covenant is imperfect. See, God required a faultless obedience to his law. Every thou shall not and every thou shall, the people have to follow. And they do not perfectly follow it. They do not remain faithful to the covenant. That is to say, they do not perfectly obey. And into the mix, the priest is offering these sacrifices.

[13:58] He's not perfect either. He's sinful. Fault number two, there's an imperfect obedience. And the third fault is to do with the place. The place where these sacrifices, worship is going on, it's impermanent.

Look at verse 5 of chapter 8. The place where all these sacrifices take place is the tabernacle. Now, the tabernacle of Moses' day, it's just a tent.

It's a mobile tent. This is where God dwells with his people. This is a place where a holy God dwells with sinful man. And the tabernacle never designed to be permanent.

That's why he calls it a shadow. He calls it a copy of what is in heaven. Now, if you think about it logically, what happens if their tabernacle, which I guess at the time of writing here is in the temple, what happens if that temple is destroyed?

That place where the priest goes on your behalf to make you right with God, if that place is destroyed, then what happens? Where do you go now to get right with God?

[15:02] Because history is going to tell us that not long after this letter is written, that AD 70, the Romans roll into Jerusalem and destroy the temple.

See, fault number three, this all goes on in an impermanent place. And that is all to show why God finds fault with the old covenant. It's faulty.

It's faulty. And so naturally, as we look at the old covenant, we're left asking ourselves, is there ever going to come one who is true and faithful to the covenant?

Where the people failed, will there ever be one who perfectly succeeds? Will there ever come one who will offer to God a once and for all, all sufficient sacrifice for the people's sin?

Will there ever come one who will perfectly obey every single iota of God's law? And will there ever come one who will minister permanently in God's presence?

[16:09] Is there ever coming one who God will look at and declare not faulty, but faultless? That's the question that we're asking as we've left the old covenant. Well, as I'm doing those dishes, I love to listen to Five Live.

It kind of kills the time for me. It's great. And I love on Five Live the football phone-in. I'm a bit of a geek for football. I'm not expecting anyone else to listen to that phone-in. But this is what people phone up on this football phone-in.

And for about 20 seconds, they get to vent their frustrations about their football team. About the manager. About the referees. It was rubbish. And they vent and they vent and they vent for about 20 seconds. And then the guy who is chairing the program, he breaks in.

And a brilliant question. He says, stop. What's your point, caller? What are you trying to say? So what? You've told me all this stuff. So what? Get to your point.

What's your point? I think Hebrews 8 has one of these moments here. Does he not? Hebrews chapter 7, we left it last week. We saw the requirements of the perfect peace.

[17:15] If you look at it, chapter 7, verse 26. This is what we need of our priests. We need one who is holy. One who is blameless. This is 26. We need one who is pure.

We need one who is set apart from sinners. We need one who is exalted above the heavens. So what's your point, caller? Mr. Hebrews. This is where he breaks in at 8, verse 1.

We have such a high priest. That's my point. We have one. He's ours. And all that priestly sacrificial system stuff, that was the picture.

And he is the reality to which it is all pointed. We have a true and perfect covenant keeper. We have a fully obedient one.

We have one who offered himself as the perfect sacrifice. And we have one who is gloriously ministering 24-7 in God's presence at his right hand in heaven.

[18:19] And what is this priest doing? We'll see verse 6. He is mediating a new covenant. What is so special about this new covenant?

Covenancy, the end of verse 6. It is established on better promises. These are the promises that the prophet Jeremiah, that's who he's quoting there, talked about nearly 600 years before Jesus sets foot on the earth.

This isn't something that Mr. Hebrews has made up. This is something that was talked about long ago. As God revealed to Jeremiah the fault of the old covenant and the new one which he was bringing in, the which one that was to be secured and guaranteed by the perfect covenant keeper, Jesus Christ.

And under it, Jesus secures for his people a more glorious and beautiful relationship with God. All those who have put their trust in Jesus as their Lord, Savior and King. All those who are seeking to follow him, his people. If that's you this morning, then these promises are for you. This is what Jesus has done for us. Because we've looked at the three problems of the old covenant.

[19 : 28] We'll see the glorious three promises of the new. Firstly, see at verse 10, there's the promise of an internal power. Now we're just going to read this together.

This is what he writes. This is the covenant. This is what Jeremiah is writing. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel. After that time, declares the Lord, I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God and they will be my people. It's glorious. So under this new covenant that Jesus ushers in for his people, God promises that he will write his law.

Do you see that? On their minds. He will write it on their hearts. This is an internal thing. Old covenant, all external. New covenant seems to be all about internal transformation.

As God sends his spirit to flood the lives of his people. As God's spirit works in them, making God's word do its work in their lives.

[20 : 33] As God's spirit working on them gives them a new power, pulls them in a new direction towards God to obey and to worship him. So do you see that? Do you ever feel that?

I find that as I'm reading scripture. As I've read something in the morning, during the afternoon it comes back to me again. It comes back to me again. The next day it comes to me again. Why? Because God by his spirit is writing it on my head and my heart.

That is the glorious promise of this new covenant. An internal power that God will send for his people. Secondly, see that there is the promise of an intimate knowledge of God. Now this is something that we've been singing about here.

That he is our God. Verse 11. No longer will they teach their neighbor or say to one another, know the Lord. Because they will all know me.

From the least of them to the greatest. So God promises that his people will have an intimate knowledge of him. Where God seemed distant, here he is promising nearness.

[21 : 36] He is not an arm-length deity. This is what this is telling us. He is an up-close and personal God who could be known directly and personally. That each one of his people he looks at and he says, You're mine.

You're mine. You're mine. And we can call him Father. Isn't that incredible? That we can know the creator of the universe.

Because God's spirit lives in us. Do you see what this is saying here? There are no inner circles of knowledge. There are no secret keys that you use to unlock secret truths that get you into secret knowledge of the secret God.

God has made himself fully known to his people. And through Jesus Christ we have confidence to come before him. Because we have access to him in Jesus Christ.

The access that was so prohibited under the old, so wonderfully changed under the new. We can know God as our God. Intimate knowledge.

[22 : 39] Third promise and impeccable forgiveness. Look at verse 12. What does he write? For I will forgive their wickedness. I will remember their sins no more.

So do you see in Jesus Christ because of his sacrifice on our behalf. As he offers himself as the once and for all perfect sacrifice. We get complete forgiveness in him.

Complete forgiveness. As far as the east is from the west. Complete and total forgiveness.

Forgiveness. It's amazing. Something that couldn't be done under the old covenant.

Now done under the new. We have complete forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Incredible. So these are the glorious benefits under the new covenant that Christ ushers us into.

He brings us into a far better and far more glorious and superior relationship with God. In Christ. Christ. Now I realize that we've rattled through that very quickly.

[23 : 38] Okay. So let me try and just as we close last little while. Let me try and bring us through those strands together. We've seen that Jesus is our great high priest who is serving on our behalf in heaven.

Now I'm thinking about it this week. He's there praying for me. He's there interceding for me. That's what our writer is telling us. Had this great time of thinking this week.

What is he praying for me? You ever wondered that? You ever wondered what Jesus Christ prays for us? What is going on in heaven's throne room as Christ is at the right hand of God?

Well can I reverently put it to you that yes, Jesus Christ's work is finished. It is gloriously finished. Once and for all sacrifice. But I think we're missing out big time if we leave our understanding from this passage there.

Can I reverently put it to you, reverently put it to you. That Jesus Christ is not sitting in heaven's throne room twiddling his thumbs so to speak. He's not there checking his watch every five minutes until that time that he comes to take us home.

[24 : 47] What is he doing here and now? Well he is ministering for his people in God's presence. He is praying for his people in God's presence. And what is he praying for?

Well I think he's praying for these new covenant promises for his new covenant people. Just think about it okay. That is to say, and I hope this massively encourages you.

That is to say, that Jesus is ever praying at his father's right hand. Asking that you and I as his people would ever become more like him.

As his spirit works in us, shaping us, transforming us to be more like him. Jesus, there praying that you and I would know God more intimately as our father.

That we can more confidently say every day with joy that he is our God. That God's glory, that our identity as the children of God would be the panorama which is there in our lives.

[25 : 48] The panorama of our lives. That Jesus is praying that we would know the full extent of what he has done for us. The forgiveness that is ours in him.

Asking that we shouldn't wallow in our sins. But look to him and what he has done on our behalf. And that as we live our lives as sheep in this world.

That we would know confidently that all authority is his. All authority is his. He is ruling and rearing at God's right hand. All authority is his.

And he holds the keys to death and life. All that they would know that more. As they live their lives in this world as aliens and strangers, as my people.

Would they know that? You see what this is saying? That this is Jesus, our great minister. I am not one of the ministers of this church. Let me tell you that. That Jesus is our great minister.

[26 : 46] All our eyes need to be on him this morning and what he is doing. Now what difference should this make to our lives? This new covenant that Jesus has ushered in.

The promises are something that we experience now. Yes completely and one day fully. But now nonetheless. That Jesus Christ ever lives and pleads for you and I.

And he will do every moment until he comes to call us home. That he is there. He is serving on our behalf. He has not left us as orphans. As orphans. Oh that we would grasp that more this morning. Do you not think that would make a difference in our lives? If you think about it. And I want to speak to you personally this morning. If you are struggling. Then know as one of God's people. That Jesus knows your circumstances.

He knows the illness. He knows the diagnosis. He knows the difficulties. He knows the family tension. He knows that hard time that you are getting at work for standing for him.

[27 : 48] He knows the friend who is giving you grief. He knows the times when your sin has made you blow it again. And in those times he is there. He is ever praying for us in those times.

He knows. He is not an idle saviour. He is our glorious and perfect high priest in heaven's course. That is the business that he is employed in now.

He is no idle saviour. It was Robert Murray McShane. One of my favourite Scottish preachers from the past. He said this. If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room.

I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me. He is praying for me.

That is where your saviour is this morning. He is not dead. We do not come here to worship a dead God. We come here to worship a risen and reigning saviour. Be encouraged.

[28 : 47] That God has made us his own. What a glorious saviour. And what an incredible God we have. Just as we come into land. Just as I was praying about this this morning and throughout this week. There is just two people.

Two kind of people I was thinking of. One is if you don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and your saviour. Now can I put it to you. Where are you looking this morning for your identity?

Where are you looking this morning for your priest? For the one that is going to make you right with God? Do you see this morning from this. The whole sacrifice thing we have been talking about. The whole point of it is that your sin has put you at odds with God.

The question is how are you going to make that right? How are you going to make it right? Here is one who is offering you glorious forgiveness in him. He has paid your price.

Here is one through whom you can know God personally. As your Lord, King and saviour. There is no other way to come to know God. Jesus Christ. Christ. You know let's chat.

[29 : 46] If that is you this morning. Let's chat and pray. After this time together. Let's make this happen this morning. Second person I was just thinking of. Is if you are a Christian here this morning.

And you are struggling. Are the toils of life taking their toll friends? Are they taking their toll? Are you finding it really difficult.

At the minute as a Christian. Well can I encourage you. Just to lift your eyes to Jesus Christ this morning. See where he is. See what he is doing. And see what he will do.

He is not an idle saviour. He is one who is praying for you. He knows your circumstances. We do not have a high priest. Who is unable to sympathize with us in our weaknesses. Here is Jesus Christ.

Ruling and reigning. I hope that is massively encouraged us this morning. Whoever you are.

Whatever is going on. That Jesus Christ is glorious. Hebrews chapter 8.

[30 : 45] Don't get caught up in the picture. Don't get caught up in the picture. No matter how beautiful the picture is. See the person to whom the picture is pointing to. Jesus Christ.

The one who brings us into a more glorious. And secures for us a superior relationship with God.

And just before we stand to sing our final song. Why don't we just have just a minute of silence.

And if you need to pray this morning. Then can I encourage you to do that. If you are one of these people who does not know Christ. Then use this time to think about what is going on in your life.

And if you are struggling this morning. Then maybe scan your eyes over that passage again. See your great high priest. Who is living to intercede for you. And then I'll close. Before the throne of God above.

I have a strong and perfect plea a great high priest whose name is love and whoever lives and pleads for me my name is graven on his hands my name is written on his heart I know that while in heaven he stands no tongue can bid me thence depart no tongue can bid me thence depart our father we're so thankful for our time together this morning help us this week by your spirit to love and to cherish and to treasure your son Jesus Christ our father would he be the one who dominates dominates our lives our father we worship you and we thank you for him in Jesus name, Amen