

Title: Leader of the Band
Text: Hebrews 2.5-9
Theme: Faithfulness under fire
Series: Hebrews #5
Prop Stmt Christ's faithfulness secured his coronation, our salvation and exaltation.

Read Text

The book of Hebrews is like a theological symphony. The melody of "press on pilgrim goes through a number of variations as it continues to build in triumph. Some of the music is in a minor key because the pressure and strain that these believers were under was getting intense. They were asking the question, "What is the use of following Christ?" I'm tired of the wind in my face. Why press on? You say that Christ is the King. You say that he is on the throne and that his enemies are going to be made into his footstool, but now I do not see evidence of that. I see tragedy, war, violence, and despair. My own life is a series of disappointments and broken promises. Sometimes I wonder if I am a fool for following Christ. In some of my darker moments I really wonder if it is all worth it. I'm just afraid to admit that to anyone, especially people at church. And yet, even in those grinding, slow, pedantic times, the melody is still there, press on pilgrim. But this refrain is not given just as an admonition. This melodic theme is built upon some of the most robust theology in the entire Bible. Some of that is in our text this morning. In fact this text is like a rose in that as it unfolds it reveals a beauty and an aroma that makes you want to just stop and try to absorb all that is being set on display. Last week, the text was tough to preach but not tough to understand. This text is a joy to preach but a challenge to understand. But, the ribs are worth the marinade.

The major reason why this text is so difficult to absorb is because many have an incomplete grasp on the gospel. You believe that Jesus came to the earth and died on the cross so that you could go to heaven when you die. That statement is true, however it is simply incomplete. That incomplete statement leaves you with the impression that this was the ultimate reason for his life and death. Therefore, this statement leaves you with the impression that what he did was all about you. So, let me tease this out just a bit. If God loves me so much and wants to bless me so much that he would send Christ to live and die for me, then why is my husband so harsh and angry and controlling? Why is my job so stressful? Why is my health such a battle? Why can't I get ahead financially? How am I supposed to believe all this about a Christ that I cannot see when it seems that everything that I can see is a mess?

My challenge this morning is to help you see from this text, that while the gospel has enormous benefits for you, most of which we have not yet grasped, the gospel is not ultimately about us. The gospel is about God and his eternal, systematic, glorious, Sovereign, multi-layered, cosmic-wide plan to exalt the supremacy of his Son whose glorious reign will only make the Father look all that more glorious. Our rescue from sin is so that our salvation will put the glorious grace of the amazing King on display. Our faithfulness under fire is not a point system whereby we become deserving of more love from God. Our faithfulness under fire is a reflection of the fact that just as the Son

believed his Father's plan for him, that we too consider the Father so glorious and so good that we will believe him and remain steadfast, no matter what. We will believe this, because we have a King, a brother, a priest, who went before us, and calls us to follow. I want you to see how the Spirit's voice in this text blows fresh wind into your sails of faith-driven obedience and joy.

Explanation

The Explanation has 3 parts because verses 5-9 have 3 parts. 1) The statement (5) 2) The support (6-8a) 3) The explanation (8b-9).

1) The Statement – (5)

Verse 5 initially seems to hang out there in midair. It really doesn't. We will eventually come to verse 16 which has very similar wording and we will be able to see the entire picture that the author is attempting to paint. Verse 5 continues to build the argument for the supremacy of Christ in all things by pointing out that "*it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come*" because, as he will point out, God subjects the entire world to Christ. Verse 5 does not complete the thought, it simply introduces it. Now, to us, this statement may seem like a straw-man argument. But, notice, Deut. 32.8, which is from the song that Moses wrote for Israel because God told him to. It is a song that speaks of God's dealings and plan for Israel. Vs. 8 says, "*When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, (I take that as a reference to the tower of Babel) he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God (a reference to angels).*" In other words, God established the number of nations based on the number of angels that he had to assign as overseers in some capacity. Now, that is a fascinating subject of its own that we do not have time to explore this morning. I reference this because it helps us understand why the Jews would see angels as having a position of authority over the nations. Angels play a very important part in the plan of God. They are not superior to Christ (1.5-14). They were part of God's process of revelation in the OT (2.1-4) and yet God's plan is not to subject the nations to angels. The author goes on to point out that the nations will be subject to Christ. (2.8) But, before we move on, take note of the phrase, "the world to come". I remind you that in establishing his powerful argument for the supremacy of Christ (1.13), the author quoted from Psalm 110 which is a Psalm of Coronation. "The LORD (Yahweh) says to my Lord (Adonai), Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." The author reminds us that God has seated his Son as King and is in the process of vindicating Christ as Lord by ordering the arrangement of the destruction his enemies. The "world to come" is going to manifest the authority of Christ by subjecting itself to him. So, according to Psalm 110 and Hebrews 1, right now Christ has been seated and crowned as King. The author of Hebrews has been arguing for this (which I take "of which we are speaking" [2.5] to reference). So, even though, right now you do not see Christ as the King. Even though right now, this world does not submit itself to Christ as King. Even though right now, circumstances in your life do not consistently reflect that Christ is King, you can and must bank on the present reality that he is King and the absolute promise that all things

will be subject to him, because what is happening right now to you, to us – the church (his band), is the same thing that happened to him. Look at v. 6. 2) The OT support

Verse 6 begins in an odd fashion doesn't it? It sounds like the writer can't remember who said this or where it is found and is too lazy to look it up and provide a decent reference. Actually, that is not the case. It is simply an expression that means "as we know". The Psalm that the author of Hebrews quotes is so well known it does not need to be referenced. This Psalm is so well known that even we (most of whom are a bunch of Gentiles) even know it. (turn to Psalm 8, but keep your finger in Hebrews 2)

Notice that Psalm 8 begins and ends with an unrestrained shout of exuberance! The LORD is our Lord (great cause for joy) and his name is kingly, it is authoritative in all the earth! His glory is displayed even over the heavens and his power is revealed in how he uses even babes and infants to accomplish his plan. (Mt. 21.16 – Christ referenced this line and applied it to himself) The Psalmist (David) spends time looking at the creative handiwork of God as the work of his fingers, (moon and stars, which he has set in place) and then he responds as so many of us have when we look at God's majestic creation and we feel so puny and insignificant. "What is man that you are mindful of him?" How come you pay attention to me at all? Why do you have any thoughts of me? After all, this universe is so ridiculously big and you care about me?!

The second line of verse 4 (Psalm 8) is an example of Hebrew parallelism, in which the second line is repeated to simply reiterate the first for emphasis. The son of man is simply an expression that refers to man (mankind). What is it about us that you pay us any attention? The question is apparently answered in verses 5-9 as David stands amazed at God's purpose for our lives. Here is what you need to know for the purpose driven life. God made man a little lower than the heavenly beings and yet crowned us with glory and honor. God gave us dominion over the works of his hands and he put all things under our feet. What does that sound like? That sounds like Genesis 2. God told Adam to name the animals because you name what you own. God told Adam to rule and subdue and to spread the borders of the garden so that entire earth would be under the dominion of man who is under the dominion of God. And Adam failed! Like the Olympic skier (video) who just barely got out of the gate and before she had a chance to hardly put both skies on the snow, she lost control and crashed into the fence. What is more, she injured herself and could not continue. All of her dreams, all of her training, all of the expectations and hope lay in a wounded pile crumpled up in the snow. The difference however, is that Adam did not lose his footing and slip, he made up his mind that he did not want to rule under God, he would rule in place of God. He sinned and He failed. He completely blew up his own purpose. And in Adam's fall, we sinned all. God's purpose for mankind was corrupted. It was violently marred. Psalm 8 seems like a cruel joke. How are we supposed to rule the world when we cannot even rule ourselves? And yet, the text stands. David's response to God's creation reveals that the dream has never died. Inside of each of us is a God-driven sense of wonder and desire to be part of something that is so much bigger than us. And yet we are surrounded with so much destruction. How can this be? The truth is God's plan remains. God really did establish the human race so that he could raise up a people who would rule under his authority.

Now, go back to Hebrews 2. When the author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 8, and asks, “What is man... or the son of man” to whom is he referring? Is he speaking of Christ or of people? Verse 9 makes it very clear that he sees this as a reference to Christ. But, how can this be a reference to Christ when the original Psalm speaks so clearly about mankind? (Now hang with me, the view is going to be worth the hike.)

I believe that the writer is anticipating the objection that someone may raise to his argument that Christ is superior to the angels by saying, how is it that Christ can be superior to the angels when Christ died. Angels do not die. The author is pointing out that it is precisely because of the humbling life and death of Christ, not in spite of it, that Christ is superior to the angels and everything else for that matter because, Christ did what no human could do and Christ did what no angel could do. He is superior to the angels, because his voluntary humbling of position, made him for a time a little lower than the angels. But, this humbling is connected to exaltation. His humbling was so radical, that his exaltation and coronation is so glorious.

Verse 7 – There is a connection between Christ being made a little lower than the angels and Christ being crowned with glory and honor. Verse 9 gives us the explanation for that. Christ was made (referring to his incarnation) a little lower than the angels ... (purpose clause) so that he might taste death for everyone.” The middle of the verse reveals that he was crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death. Now I jumped ahead briefly, let’s go back and catch verse 8. 3) The explanation

The numbering of verse 8 is awful. The guy who numbered the verse here put it right in the middle of the quote from Psalm 8. The quote from Psalm 8 ends with the phrase about everything being in subjection under his feet, which is a deliberate connection back to 1.13. In the next line the author states 2 obvious points. The 1st one is logical and the 2nd one is experiential. 1) Everything means everything. But then 2) the author points that that while everything is under Christ’s control, it sure doesn’t seem like that. “We do not yet see everything in subjection to him.” What is he saying? It sure doesn’t look like Christ is King! Then he gives us vs. 9, which is not only an explanation of verse 7 and 8a, but it is an answer to the cry of the believer whose faithfulness is under so much fire. And in answering this, he not only ties together his reason for quoting Psalm 8, but he opens our eyes to how God has redeemed and recovered the purpose for our very existence!

Go back to verse 6. I believe that the first line (“what is man?”) refers to the human race and that the second line (“son of man”) refers to the 2nd Adam of the human race. Christ is the Son of Man who like the human race that he became part of, humbled himself to become part of his creation (mankind) and lower than part of his creation (angels). He did this in order that he could do what the 1st Adam could not do. Jesus (1st mention of his name in the book – v.9), was made part of the human race so that he could experience death in our place as the substitute for our sins. He did this perfectly. He did this completely. He did this thoroughly because he never lost faith in his Father nor in his Father’s plan. He took the cup of wrath and took upon himself our sin. His faithful suffering, his faith-filled dying, his faith-driven death was so satisfying to the Father (Is.

53.11), that not only did his death pay for our sins in full, but, his trust in the Father's plan was a glorious statement that the Son cherished the Father's glory more than his own life. So, not only was the resurrection of Christ the proof that God had accepted the payment of Christ for our sin, but his resurrection and his ascension and his coronation at the Father's side as the King of the universe was the Father's response to the perfect faith and complete obedience of his Son. This is my Son! This is your Redeemer! This is your King! And I, the Father am crowning him with glory and honor!

But there is more. Christ, by means of his death, permanently secured his exaltation so that one day all things and all people will recognize that they are subject to him. But what is more, his death (humiliation)/exaltation is the lead event for the parade of our salvation that brings deliverance from sin, wrath, and takes us with him to rule and reign and inherit this glorious kingdom. So, here we go with the application part.

Application

1. Christ is the leader of the band of brothers and we are the band.

Go back again to verse 6. I take the first line of the Psalm 8 quote to refer to man and the second line to refer to Christ, the perfect representative of man. What we were made for, Christ fulfilled, so that when we by faith trust him as our King and Savior, we are united with him in such a way that he is credited with our sin (which he died for) and we are credited with his righteousness. We are united to Christ in such a complete and permanent way, that while he takes all of the penalty of sin from off of our account, we are credited with his perfect life, his all-sufficient and complete-atoning death, his resurrection, ascension and coronation. What that means is, when we come to faith in Christ, we are forged into Christ in such a way that we enter into his pattern. He died for our sin. We die, in a real and personal sense to our old way of living and thinking. He arose, we come alive spiritually by means of the Spirit, and one day, after this body has died, it too will be resurrected. He ascended and was crowned as king. We too one day, will rule and reign with him. Forever, we are a permanent part of the kingdom of Christ, because we are a permanent part of Christ. More on that next week.

2. Christ leads us through suffering in faith to glory.

Christ trusted the Father through the most undeserved, unrighteous, unfair, intense form of suffering that could ever be endured. As God, Christ had an infinite capacity to love and to enjoy the love of the Father. As God, Christ had from eternity past enjoyed the infinite adulation of his Father. But now, on the cross, Christ was forsaken by His Father. Christ was abandoned that day and turned over to bear our curse and to suffer our punishment and to be counted as guilty. In a strange sense, those who mocked him and cursed him, were right in the sense that due to the fact that he was credited with my sin, he was cursed. In all of that the Father did not do anything to rescue his Son and yet he never stopped loving his Son. That day, Christ took upon himself everything that is repulsive to the beautiful and holy righteousness of God. Why did Christ do that? Was it because he loved us? Certainly. But there was something even more. Yes, he loved us,

but he loved his Father's glory even more. The depth of the suffering of Christ was the cry of the Son's commitment to his Father's glory. That is why you can bank everything you are on the love of Christ for you because Christ's love for you is driven by his love and commitment to his Father's glory. He suffered in faith. He suffered because he loved more than anything his Father's glory. And it was to the praise of the glorious and infinite and matchless and eternal grace of almighty God, that broken, wounded, helpless sinners would be forgiven and called Sons and along with their Savior be crowned with glory and honor and inherit a position that causes even the angels to look on in wonder. The love of Christ for his Father's glory was deep beyond description and in that love the Father takes such infinite pleasure. Even as his own Son was bearing the Father's wrath, the Father was overjoyed at the love of his Son. He knew what his Son was bearing. He knew the cost. He knew the suffering. He knew the power of his own wrath. And he knew the depth of his Son's love for him and he was so infinitely pleased at the faith and the love and the faith-driven perseverance of his Son, who even though he was bearing the Father's wrath, he was still able at the moment of his death to say, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit!" Even though Christ was forsaken by the Father, he trusted the Father with his dying breath and in that moment the pleasure of the Father and the joy of the Father in his Son's obedience reached the magnificent level. Jesus died so that his Father's glory would be seen in a people set apart and kept by God forever and ever. In response to this perfect faith and obedience the Father raised him from the dead and raised him back to his right side and declared, "sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Yes, he was made for a little while lower than the angels, but now he is crowned with glory and honor."

Response

1. Come to Christ.

Leave everything else and come to Christ. Trust in nothing else but Christ alone.

2. Press on Pilgrim

The leader of the band showed us in the midst of the greatest abandonment and greatest suffering how to respond. In the gap between the promises and the fulfillment, we press on. The Son believed the Father and pressed on, and now he calls you to do the same. Got cancer? Press on. Got a broken heart? Press on. Got a hurting marriage? Press on.

Press on in the steps of Christ. Press on in joy that comes from believing in the goodness of the Father in the midst of suffering because you consider the glory of his plan to be more precious than anything else.

3. Observe the Lord's Table as a taste that reminds you of your union with Christ and his body.

Passages to reflect on: Romans 6.5-11; Philippians 3.7-11; 2 Timothy 2.10-13