

Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. ² *He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.* ³ *Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.* ⁴ *For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.* ⁵ *Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future.* ⁶ *But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.* (Hebrews 3:1-6)

Jesus is Faithful

Did you ever have one of those weeks that you wish you could just erase? I did this past week. Now, I hesitate to say that because I don't want one family who suffered along with me this week to feel like they were responsible for the week I had. They weren't. The events were beyond their control and there was more going on. Completely unrelated issues arose and over the last ten days or so, it was one thing after another. And believe it or not, we pastors have feelings, too. We wrestle with our bad days and difficult weeks just like you do. On Friday morning, when I left for church, I told my wife that I was heading over to the arena to fight the lions like some Christians had to in the early church. Needless to say, I indulged in a lot of self-pity this week. Self-pity is ugly and it's unworthy of a Christian. But have you ever had one of those weeks or months or years in which you struggled with what's happening in your life? If so, then you know how easy it is to fall into that temptation. This morning, God speaks to us about the cure for self-pity. When it comes to feeling sorry for ourselves, we need to stop focusing on us and how we feel. We need to change our focus to Jesus. He is the cure for our hearts because he promises a cure for our lives and **Jesus is faithful.**

I.

Jesus is faithful to his mission. That's where the text begins this morning. The person who wrote the book of Hebrews – and the Bible never tells us who that was – says, **“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.”** What does it mean that Jesus is “the apostle and high priest whom we confess”? Well, you've probably heard us call Jesus our prophet, priest and king. But what about our apostle? We don't often call him that. When we think of apostles, we usually think of men like Peter and Paul and John. But an apostle is someone sent on a mission to proclaim the gospel. That's what Jesus came here to do. He did it during his life here. He ascended into heaven to continue to proclaim that good news for as long as this world lasts. Calling Jesus our apostle is just another way of saying he's our prophet. He's the one who brings God's message to us, God's people.

Jesus is also our high priest. At first, that might sound like the same thing, but it's not. The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians. For the Jews, there was a difference between a prophet and a priest. A prophet or an apostle is a preacher. He does what I do. But a priest offers sacrifices to God for his people. His job is to satisfy God's anger over sin and get forgiveness for the people. In its truest sense, there was really only one real priest in all of history: Jesus. He offered the sacrifice that paid for our sins once and for all when he gave his life for us on the cross.

What's fascinating about this lesson is the way Jesus got that job of apostle and high priest. The writer says, **“He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.”** Jesus was appointed to be our apostle and high priest. By whom? By God the Father. This is one of those great mysteries of the Trinity. The Father and the Son are equal in every way. Yet, God the Father sent his one and only Son to live and die for us. He sent him to proclaim that good news to us. How all that worked is really beyond our human ability to understand. We simply can't inject ourselves into the conversations the Triune God had within himself before the world began. So the Bible doesn't try to make all the metaphysical realities clear to us. Instead, it points to a concrete example that we can all understand: Moses.

Moses was faithful in all God's house. Every believer hears about the life of Moses. We all know that as a baby, Pharaoh's daughter rescued him from the Nile and raised him as a prince of Egypt. We've seen *The Ten Commandments* – which is not a terribly accurate portrayal, by the way – but we know that Moses led the people out of Egypt and across the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai where God gave them the Ten Commandments. For forty years, Moses led the people in the desert while they whined and complained and made him pay for their

unhappiness. In all of it, Moses clung to God and his promises and did his duty. He was faithful to the Lord even when his people weren't. Just as Moses fulfilled his mission, Jesus fulfilled the mission God gave him.

God did all that because we needed him to. This week when I was struggling with my own frustration over the difficult issues I faced, I talked to another pastor. I asked him, "Is it weakness for me to hate this kind of thing?" You know what he said? "Yes. It is weakness." He did go on to say that all pastors struggle with the difficult things God calls us to do, especially when we have to say things people don't want to hear. But if our faith were perfect, being faithful to the Lord wouldn't bother us, no matter what the consequences.

You know what? We pastors are no different from you. We suffer anxiety when we face conflict and tough situations. On Friday, I refused to even check my e-mail until after I wrote my sermon because I didn't want to deal with it. The sin and weakness in our hearts make us all do things like that. We all wish that God would stop making us face hardship and difficulty. We all feel sorry for ourselves. We demonstrate that our faith is totally imperfect.

Having a weak faith is sin. It proves that our hearts are not right with God. Having a weak faith that doesn't want to do what the hard things God calls us to do is a slap in God's face. Can any of us claim to have a faith that always does those hard things? We all deserve to go to hell because our faith is weak. We pastors first of all. But God is greater than our hearts. He sent his Son into the world to be the high priest who paid for our sin and weakness. Jesus offered his life on the cross as the sacrifice that wipes away all our sin, all our weakness, all the imperfections in our faith. Jesus makes it all disappear in his blood.

Jesus is the apostle who comes to us in his word and comforts our hearts. He says, "I forgive you for being weak. I love you and I have washed all your sin and weakness away." In those words, we find comfort and relief, because they are the very words of God. Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." He lifts our troubles off our shoulders and carries them himself. Jesus strengthens our hearts to stand up when we're suffering and unhappy. Jesus renews our faith and gives us the courage to proclaim what he has said and to live as he calls us to live, even when it means that we have to do things we don't want to do. Jesus is faithful to his mission for you and for me.

II.

And **Jesus is faithful to his person.** He is faithful to who and what he is. God didn't send Jesus here against his will. He didn't force him to come. Jesus came willingly because Jesus loves us just as much as his Father does. Jesus loves us with the very love of God, because he is God the Son.

That's the point our lesson makes when it compares Jesus to Moses. Moses was faithful in all God's house but Jesus was greater. The writer says, "**Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.**" No matter how much we respect Moses for the courage and the faithfulness he showed in impossible situations – and Moses was truly a unique figure in the Bible – Jesus is greater. Moses was a part of God's house but Jesus is the builder of the house. God made all that we see in this life. That means that Jesus made it because he is God.

The Son of God is the one who's working for us. The Son of God reaches down from heaven into our hearts every time we hear his word. The Son of God loved us so much that he died for us. Then he rose for us. Now, he rules all things for our good. So every time we run into those hard situations, we can be sure that we are exactly where the Son of God wants us to be. And when we start feeling sorry for ourselves, the Son of God calls us to remember that he is in control and he has set this cross on us. He asks us to trust that he knows what he is doing. He's the Son of God. He asks us to trust that we will grow through this particular suffering. He asks us to trust that others will benefit from our suffering. He reminds us that all the pain and hurt here are only temporary. When they're done, we will live with him in joy forever. That's what Jesus promises us. We can trust that those promises will come true because the one who made them is the Son of God who became man to save us. He cannot deny who and what he is. He is faithful to his person.

III.

And **Jesus is faithful to his Church.** Throughout this lesson, God talks about his house. I'll confess, when I first started reading this passage, I wondered what he meant when he said that Moses was faithful in all God's house. Was he talking about Israel? Was he talking about the Levites who were the priests in the Old Testament? But the last verse makes it clear. He says, "**And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage**

and the hope of which we boast.” Who is the “we”? It’s us believers. It’s all people who trust in Jesus as our Savior. We are God’s house.

Faith makes us a part of the house of God. Holding on to our courage and the hope of which we boast means clinging to Christ in faith in this sinful and difficult world. It’s not always easy to be a believer. The society we live in doesn’t want to hear what God’s Word actually says. It doesn’t want to hear that every one of us is a sinner and we deserve to go to hell. It doesn’t want to hear how God commands us to live – especially when God tells us to separate from false teachers, to uphold the proper roles for men and women, to put him first, even ahead of our own families. In this life, people who don’t want to hear that message are going to make us pay when we insist on sharing it and standing on it.

But that’s why we focus on Jesus. The verse right before our lesson says, **“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”** Jesus, our apostle and high priest, knows what life is like here. He knows what it’s like to be pounded on for standing up for God and for living in a way that condemns people who don’t follow God. He knows how easy it would be for us to just give up. He gives us the strength we need to follow him. The verses that come after this lesson point out that the people the Moses led out of Egypt did not reach the Promised Land. Their bodies were scattered in the desert. Why? Because they did not trust in God when things got tough. They whined and complained and blamed Moses. They did what they wanted to do instead of what God called them to do.

My friends, Jesus has done everything for us. He is faithful to his Church. He protects us. He decides what sufferings we have to face and what sufferings to spare us. And he promises to bring us home to heaven. When we focus on him, then we have the strength to live as he calls us to. Now, does that mean we’ll never hurt? No. We live in a sinful world. Sometimes, we’re going to pay for being faithful. But so did Jesus. In fact, he tells us that if we share in his glory, we’re also going to share in his sufferings here. But we are going to share in his glory. We finally will be with him. When we get there, we’ll see that it was all worth it. We’ll see that all that we suffered here really worked for our good and for the good of the Church. We will rejoice to be with Jesus forever. My friends, my dear sharers of the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus because he is faithful to his mission to save us, because he is faithful to who he is, our God and Savior, because he is faithful to us, his Church. Amen.