

Sermon Reading: Hebrews 2:9-18

But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰ *In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. ¹¹ Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. ¹² He says,*

*“I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the assembly I will sing your praises.”*

¹³ *And again,*

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again he says,

“Here am I, and the children God has given me.”

¹⁴ *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. ¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

Sermon Theme: There’s No Place like Home

After Dorothy finishes her adventures in the Land of Oz, she’s ready to return to Kansas. Clicking her ruby red slippers three times she repeats, “There’s no place like home....there’s no place like home...” We may not have ruby red slippers that we can click together, but we know the feeling. As enjoyable as that vacation may be, there’s something about sleeping in your own bed. After a hospital visit there’s something about finally eating your own food in the privacy of your own place. When work and life is crazy and you get back to your favorite place in the house and maybe you have your family who loves and supports you...there’s no place like home.

Do you feel like that when you come to church, that this is your home? Some of you may. This is where you are comfortable. You love being here and love seeing everyone. Some of you...maybe not so much. Instead you may be thinking, “I feel more like a

stranger and I don't quite fit. Everyone has their cliques and groups and I'm on the outside. It feels like everyone is judging me and everything I say or do."

When we gather for worship, we are home because you are with your spiritual family. Today we take a closer look at our Christian family and especially at the one who ties us together, our brother, Jesus.

In Hebrews 2:9 we see Jesus, our brother, who lowers himself below the angels for a little while. This is the same Jesus who the writer in chapter 1 describes as the "radiance of God's glory" (1:2) who "sustains all things by his powerful word" (1:3). Our brother is the Lord who rules over all things and everything—including those angels—are subject to him. He's the one whom the Father says, "**In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands**" (1:10). That's your brother.

That same Jesus, true God from the beginning leaves his perfect, sinless home of heaven and his perfect Triune Family. That Jesus is born into this dumpster called earth calling this sinful place filled with sinful people home. He didn't spend just a couple of days here just to get a taste of it. He lives here for 33 years! We can't even begin to imagine what that was like for the perfect, sinless God Jesus.

But don't feel bad for Jesus. No one forces him to do this. He chooses to do it so that he could "**bring many sons and daughters to glory**" (v.10). But why do they need to be led to glory? Because we couldn't get there on our own. No amount of determination and will was going to bring us to that glory. Because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And we know that; we readily admit that no one is perfect. But far from excusing our not-being-good-enough, this condemns us. It ruins our relationships with each other (even our closest ones). And it keeps you from having a right relationship with God. In order to be part of God's family one must measure up to God's glory. God makes it quite clear: Be holy—not once falling into sin—as I the Lord God am Holy (Leviticus 19:2). Quite simply: because you sin, you don't belong and are not welcome.

That's why Jesus takes on flesh and blood. He shares in our humanity, is like us and fully human in every way, so that "**by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.**" Very few would willingly taste the punishment for their brother or sister's actions. No, we quickly remark, "I didn't do it! It's not my fault!" But here is your brother, Jesus, who willing drinks the punishment for our sin. The thing that enslaves us with fear, Jesus faces it head on to set us free. Jesus lowers himself even to death on the cross so that you would be lifted up to His glory.

But in order to complete his plan to save you from death, it was fitting that God the Father should have Jesus suffer. In order that he be your complete and perfect Savior,

God punishes Jesus so that he does not punish you. Jesus suffers, so that you would not suffer death in hell. And with his suffering and his death, your very real flesh-and-blood brother crushes the serpent Satan's head destroying the devil's work.

And through it all, Jesus is proud to call himself your brother. In v.11 we hear: **“Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.”** Many people are ashamed of their families. Someone all-but-ruins the family's name, are a well-known hot mess, and they keep making all the wrong decisions with his life...and people know. And if that's your family member, you are ashamed. You are ashamed to admit your relationship. You are concerned what others will think of you if they know you are from *that* family. Maybe you feel that person is you.

If there was a brother who has every right to be ashamed of his siblings, it's Jesus. No one could have blamed him if he disowned us long ago. But that's not how Jesus sees you. He is the one who made us perfect through his suffering. He is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters because he has made us holy in his sight. He is not afraid of being seen with you. No, as sure as I am standing in front of you, your brother Jesus is proud to be with you today. He says to his Father in verse 12: **“I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.”** In the assembly—among us today—Jesus is with us in our worship.

But Jesus isn't just here worshipping with us; it's here where Jesus gives to us. It was very likely here, in God's house, where a pastor washed you with water and the Word in baptism and you were brought into God's family. You were promised that sin will not control you as you died to sin with Jesus on the cross and rose with Jesus to a new life as God's child. It's here where Jesus comes to you in the Word that is spoken into your ears and poured onto your heart. He speaks through his called servant, “Your sins are forgiven.” You are family! We need not fear God's anger, for Jesus' sake the Father is well-pleased with you. Yes, you very well may be afraid of death, but fear need not drown you for Jesus won the victory over death and gives us through faith. We need not fear sin and temptation, Jesus is here to strengthen you to persevere under trial. And so it's here where Jesus gives you the nourishment that you need with his body and blood that is given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Where else does Jesus physically touch your hands and lips? Here, at the Lord's Supper, Jesus comes to you in a personal way with the bread and wine, his body and blood to strengthen your faith and forgive your sin.

And it's here where your brothers and sisters are. Whether we want to admit it or not, whether we recognize it or not, we need each other. God made humans to be social creatures. God himself says it's not good for man to be alone. In Ecclesiastes we read

two are better than one (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). While that passage is often applied to the bond of marriage, it also applies to our bonds to one another as well. And how much stronger those relationships are when we are tied together with our brother Jesus.

And for some, that's what they have found in this church home. They found caring and supportive brothers and sisters in Christ.

But as we see with our physical siblings, we see with our brothers and sisters in Christ: we don't always get along. And this shouldn't shock us. We are sinful people who continue to struggle and fall into sin. As long as we live in this sinful world we will have to live with this truth. But the sad fact is that in our church family we can flat out hurt each other. Unloving attitudes and actions break relationships so that the church can feel like anything but a home one wants to come back to again. And for some it never felt like home.

Your pride wants you to say I didn't do that. The devil wants you to put the blame on someone else. You may want to believe that it shouldn't have been that big of a deal. But today you and I have an opportunity to think and confess. Were you upset about something as silly as how to do this or it should have been done like that? Were you simply too selfish to consider how your own words and actions impact others? Were you too busy serving yourself to think about how you can serve those around you? Instead of taking words and actions in the kindest possible way were you quick to take it the worst way possible? Did you let your pride get the best of you so that it is keeping you from forgiving? Did you lose control of emotions and your words? I invite you today to confess your sin with me for every unkind thought, every hurtful word, and every self-serving action begging for Jesus' forgiveness. For all the ways we fail to be the brothers and sister God calls us to be, we repent.

And Jesus assures you, "You are forgiven. As far as the east is from the west, I have removed them and their guilt from you. Now, 'Come to me all you who are wearied and burdened and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28)." The fact is, we all need to be here at home in worship with our spiritual family. Who doesn't feel wore out and tired from all the expectations and responsibilities of life and the struggle against sin? Who doesn't feel the weight of concern for loved ones and family members? Who isn't just tired from not knowing what tomorrow will bring and what's going to happen? Jesus says, "I will give you rest." He doesn't say that he is going to give us the answer, but he promises that he works it all for your good. He doesn't say that he will take away the burdens, but he promises, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness**" (2 Cor. 12:9). He doesn't say he will take the temptations away, but he assures you "I know what and how you are suffering. I suffered when I was tempted. I'm here to help you."

Your brother Jesus works here through Word and Sacrament to give you rest and empower you. He works through your brothers and sisters, your spiritual family as well. He works through us to fight against the loneliness and fear that so easily grips us. We are here to support one another as we continue to struggle. We are here to encourage one another and to bring back. Look for opportunities to show Jesus' love and forgiveness that he freely gives to you to fellow members of our church family. Think about who is hurting, who needs help, how can I serve, and what can I do?

I remember talking to an older individual who was no longer able to come church. I think just about every time I saw them, with a tear in their eye, they made the comment of how much they miss being in church and how they wish they could make it. They recognized there's no place like home being with their brothers and sisters in Christ. I do not share this to shame anyone, but to encourage you to see what a blessing it is when we come together for worship. There's no place like home where your Brother Jesus comes to you in Word and Sacrament and where you are with your brothers and sisters. Amen.