

January 10, 2021

Reviving our Faith

"For this reason he had to be made like his brothers 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. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Therefore, holy brother, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess."

Hebrews 2:17-3:1

Even as we struggle to keep the flame of our faith in Jesus strong it is, I think, essential to constantly remind ourselves of the one in whom we place that faith. As we noted last week, Jesus is the Son of God and the ***"...exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."*** As believers you and I have chosen to place our faith and our confidence in the Son of God instead of trusting in all of the other possibilities that the world might offer us.

Among the Jewish people the High Priest was considered the most holy of all people, even though many of them failed to live up to that standard. Under the Old Law the High Priest was the bridge between God and his people. His duties included making the essential sacrifices on the Day of Atonement for himself and then for all the people.

Obviously one of the biggest pitfalls for those who served as High Priest was a false belief in their own perfection. In the same way belief in our own perfection makes it hard, if not impossible, for us to practice mercy. Jesus is an entirely different kind of High Priest.

In choosing to place our faith in Jesus we are choosing to let Jesus be our bridge to God, Our High Priest. Instead of trusting someone who believes they are perfect when they are not we are choosing to place our faith in one who actually is perfect but completely understands just how hard it is for us to reject sin. The author reminds us that in our Lord, ***"...we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin."*** (4:15)

Because he understand our struggles with sin he is perfectly equipped to help us fight sin. Jesus then, is our perfect High Priest, our perfect bridge to God, the source of our atonement and salvation. When our faith is being challenged it is nearly always because we are placing it in the imperfect things of this world. As we discussed last week, we place our faith in our riches, in our personal power, and in people and faith in any of those things will always let us down.

Every man who served as a Jewish High Priest was flawed by his own sinfulness, even though the did not always acknowledge that. Thus, on the Day of Atonement, God demanded that the High Priest first offer a sacrifice for his own sins, and only then could he offer sacrifice for the sins of the people. But Jesus is our perfect High Priest, because he is sinless, even though he perfectly understands our struggles with temptation having personally experienced them all.

Jesus is perfectly equipped to help you and I address the sin in our lives because he understands our every temptation. There is no temptation that we experience that he did not experience. We so often fall to those temptations, but he never did. As someone who was completely human Jesus demonstrates a reality that we do not always want to accept. If he who was totally human could reject every temptation, then frankly, so can you and I. We are then, without excuse when we fall to temptation because Jesus demonstrates that we did not have to.

As our perfect High Priest Jesus stands as our bridge to God. In his atoning sacrifice we are made perfect and in his personal understanding of our struggles with temptation we can find help from the one who is perfectly merciful. And so, even in the face of almost overwhelming pressure to place our faith in something or someone else, we, who are faithful, choose Jesus.

