

THE HIGH PRIEST

Hebrews 4:14-5:5

- Whenever I first saw Rachel, she walked into our church offices down in Shelby and I knew that I had to meet her.
 - I did a little digging at first, reading up on her if you will, on social media and whenever I mustered up the courage I finally sent her a friend request on facebook.
 - However, I didn't realize at the time that facebook was obsolete when it came to romantic inquiries...but I KNEW I was in there and had a chance whenever she on her own volition, added me on instagram.
 - It was getting pretty serious
 - However at this time we still had not had any direct communication, and I still did not feel as if I could confidently approach her and begin a conversation much less a relationship unless I had someone connect us
- So I appealed to a mutual friend that we both had, Austin Miller
 - He asked me if he could gauge her to see if she would be interested and I said he could as long as he wasn't weird about it.
 - But of course, he was weird about it...
 - But the plan was to have him introduce us the following Sunday after church
 - We both knew the plan was for us to be introduced, and Rachel was waiting around after the service...but again, I still didn't feel like I could confidently approach her myself without the introduction being made
 - Austin was taking forever talking to so many other people and I felt like we were about to miss the opportunity
 - But finally, right before Rachel was about to give up and leave...Austin caught her and introduced us, and because of that I could then confidently engage Rachel, ask her out

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to dinner, and thus our relationship could begin.

- You see, whenever sin entered into the world, a separation between God and mankind occurred.
- Therefore we could not just confidently approach God and begin a relationship with Him on our own
 - We needed someone to go before us, to make the introduction, so to speak
 - And the writer of Hebrews says that's exactly what Jesus did for us
- To put in the context of what his readers would understand, he refers to Jesus as a high priest.
- Because ever since the day of Moses, the high priest is the one who would go before God on behalf of the people
 - And not just anyone could be a high priest.

- The high priest had to be from a specific bloodline, and they had to be chosen by God to serve in that role.
- The high priest had to be from the tribe of Levi
- They had to be whole physically and holy in conduct
- They oversaw all of the responsibilities of the subordinate priests
 - The high priest was the one that kings and officials would consult with to find out the exact will of God on any particular issue
- But the most important aspect of the duties of the high priest was to conduct the service on the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur
 - This was a day, once a year on the 10th day of the 7th month when the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. The resting place of the Ark of the Covenant and the Presence of God

- He would have to offer a sacrifice for sins of himself and the sins of his family...and then he would do the same for the sins of the people of Israel in general
- And thus there could be a temporary atonement for the sins of the people and God's presence could remain with them.
- The high priest was the one who represented the people before God, and also would represent God before the people
- He was the one that would intercede for the people, go before God on their behalf, and keep the relationship between God and His people intact...ideally that is
- However the writer says in verse 14: —
>**“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.” -Hebrews 4:14 (ESV) —**>
- That we have an even Greater High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, who did not just enter a

temporary space....no, He passed through the Heavens, He entered the very throne room of God to represent us on our behalf.

- Therefore we can hold fast our confession
- Literally meaning, **Confession (homologia): “the substance of our profession, which we embrace with hope”**
 - So because Jesus acts as our Great High Priest we can embrace the Hope, that is, the confident expectation that we can approach God
 - That we can begin a conversation with God
 - That we can begin a real relationship with God
 - Because Jesus went before us to make the introduction, to make an appeal for us.
- That's why we can be confident in our relationship with God, not because of who we are, but because of Who Jesus is, and what He's done

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- But how many of us completely miss out on it?
- Think of what I would have missed out on, if Austin went out of his way to make the introduction of Rachel and I, but last second I just said, ahhhh never mind...
 - What if I liked my idea of Rachel and who she could be and just stayed comfortable with that, rather than actually getting to know who she actually was
- Wayyyy too many people do that with God. We've read about Him, we've formed an idea of what we think He's like or what He could be like
 - But we don't actually want to get to know Him for Who He really is because He might not line up with the ideas and opinions about Him that I have already formed and become comfortable with.
- However, Jesus died, poured out His blood on the cross to be the sacrifice for the atonement of our sins, and passed through the Heavens to the very Holy Presence of God to give us the opportunity not just to know about God, but to actually know Him.
- But often times we are afraid to take advantage of this incredible gift because we're caught up with "What if's?"
 - *What if He isn't what I expected Him to be?*
 - *What if He is displeased with me because of some of my past or current actions?*
 - *What if I can't cut it in what you call this Christian life?*
- And the people that the writer of Hebrews is writing to specifically at this time are undoubtedly caught up in some "What if's" as well:
 - *What if my life or the life of someone I love is taken away because of this faith that we have chosen to follow?*
 - *What if the old ways actually are better?*

- *What if God is displeased because I'm caught up in these What if's and these fears and these doubts*
- But the writer is trying to put their minds at ease with the truths that He is sharing
 - Because he says in verse 15: —>“**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses**”
-Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)—> we have a high priest that is able to sympathize with us.
- I think using the language of High Priest sometimes might lead us to think of someone very impersonal.
 - It might have even led these original readers to think this way as well in the immediate context they were living in under the authority of so many fear mongering Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - So saying “High Priest,” might lead some of us think of someone who stands on some pious pedestal above everyone else just,
- monitoring their behavior, and sticking up their noses at anyone they think isn't cutting it
- But the writer of Hebrews is saying, that's not our High Priest. That's not our Jesus. No, we have a high priest that sympathizes.
 - No, **WE HAVE A HIGH PRIEST THAT FEELS OUR PAIN**
 - That word Sympathize can be translated, “To be touched with the feeling of”
- It literally means: **Sympathize (Sympatheō): to be affected with the same feeling as another**
 - I don't think this any more apparent than whenever we see Jesus at Lazarus' tomb
 - If you're not familiar with the story, in John chapter 11, two of Jesus dearest friends, Mary and Martha send word to Jesus that their brother has gotten sick, and he's dying

- So Jesus makes His way to go see them and to work a miracle. However, whenever Jesus arrives, Lazarus has already been dead for 4 days.
- Now, Jesus knew that he was going to die, He told His disciples before they even made the journey that Lazarus would be dead by the time they got there, but He said this sickness isn't unto death but that the Son of God made be glorified through it.
 - And Through this, Jesus is going to show a display of His power that the world had not seen yet. His power over death itself.
- However, John writes, ***“When Jesus saw [Mary] weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, “See how He loved him!” -John 11:32-36 (NKJV)***
- John 11:35 might be the shortest verse in the bible, but I believe it is one of the most theologically profound verses we could ever find in the New Testament....
 - *“Jesus Wept.” -John 11:35*
 - My question is, why would He weep?
- Because if I'm Jesus in this situation, I'm arriving on this scene ready to perform an incredible miracle that's gonna blow everyone's mind!
 - In just a few short moments they were going to go from crying to celebrating! We about to turn mourning to Dancing, we're going to turn this funeral to a fiesta, PRAISE GOD!
 - I'd be saying, “Dry your eyes, watch what I'm about to do! Oh ye of little faith!”
- But that's not the heart of our Savior
- Yes, He knows the Victory that's going to come, He knows that the pain won't last forever, He knows that He is ultimately going to

take care of all of it all in the grand scheme of eternity...

- However He still takes the time to sympathize, to feel the pain and cry with you, right now.
- That's the type of High Priest that we have.
 - We have a High Priest that took the time to weep at Lazarus' tomb
 - We have a High Priest who knows, has felt, and currently feels our pain
 - We have a High Priest that has endured the struggle of losing a loved one
 - We have a High Priest that knows what it's like to be abandoned by those closest to Him
 - We have a High Priest that knows what it's like to have no one understand Him
 - We have a High Priest that knows hunger, we have a High Priest that knows what it's like to be broke.
- This is no doubt why we can confidently call Him a Wonderful Counselor...because He can

be there for you now, because He's been there before

- There is no pain or struggle that you can experience that He Himself has not experienced or does not take the time to feel with you. Because He loves you.
 - That's why you can be confident to cast every care upon Him because He cares for you! He sympathizes
- And He not only feels our pain, but also, **WE HAVE A HIGH PRIEST THAT KNOWS THE STRUGGLE: "...One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."** -*Hebrews 4:15b (ESV)*—>
- The writer of Hebrews goes on to say in verse 15, that we have a High Priest that sympathizes even with the struggles of Temptation.
 - He says that He has been tempted in every respect just as we are, yet stayed without sin.

- John, in his epistle says that we can put sin and temptation into 3 main categories.
 - He says in 1 John 2:16, ***“For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.” -1 John 2:16 (ESV)***
 - Many translations say, the lust of the flesh and eyes
 - The word literally means, a craving, longing, or desire for that which is forbidden.
- We see Jesus overcoming all three of these temptations in Luke chapter 4.
 - Whenever Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread to satisfy His hunger and break His fast...He was tempted with the desires of the flesh
 - Whenever Satan tempted Him by showing Him all of the Kingdoms of the World in a moment...Satan appealed to the Desire of the Eyes
- Whenever Jesus was Tempted to gain the acceptance of everyone if He would jump off the pinnacle of the Temple and allow Angels to catch Him in dramatic fashion....He was tempted by the Pride of Life.
 - Now, Jesus intentionally went through this struggle and faced these temptations, not to prove His power or to win some sort of showdown with satan
 - No, He went through them so that the writer of Hebrews would be able to write what He did
- He needed to be able to know and experience, first hand, our struggle. To know the hardship and difficulties that the temptations of this world and the enemy will throw at us
 - So He can help us navigate them.

- Paul says in 1 Corinthians, *“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.*
 - No matter what the enemy tells you, there is no form of temptation that you can experience that isn’t common to others. You are not alone.
- When the temptations come, Jesus is always there to provide a way of escape
 - We need to escape the temptation, not fight the temptation
 - We ourselves will never be stronger than temptation, instead we escape to the God who IS stronger than the temptation
- That’s why the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin.
 - He is the only One who was ever strong enough to beat the temptation! He beat it, so He could help you could escape it!
- Which also leads to an important distinction that there is a difference between sin and temptation.
 - Feelings, desires, and temptations are not sinful, until they are acted upon.
- That’s why James says, ***“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”***
-James 1:14-15 (NKJV)
- Draw you away from what? Your ultimate dependence on God.
- ***Temptation is the enemy’s attempt to draw you away from God’s best for you.***
- Think about it. Jesus was tempted to turn a stone into bread to satisfy His hunger.
 - Now, is it a sin to eat bread whenever you are hungry? No. It’s not. But in the context of where Jesus was, He was in a place

intentionally fasting to connect better with the Father.

- So Satan wanted Jesus to break His fast, and miss out on what the Father had for Him in that moment.
 - And the enemy wanted Jesus to put His physical need for food, over His spiritual need for the Father.
 - So therefore Jesus responded with, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but every Word that comes from the mouth of God.”
- You see, the enemy doesn’t always appeal to blatant sinful acts in order to get you to stumble into sin
- Rather, many times the enemy just wants to take a good thing, like food, money, success, even sex, and make them an ultimate thing, and take them outside of God’s place and design
- *It’s not a sin to have a good job. It’s a sin to make that job the highest priority of your life.*

- *Romans says that anything that is not of faith is sin.*
- *Satan’s goal in our lives, as was his goal with that temptation of Jesus, is to distort God’s design for something good in order to diminish your faith in Him...and lead you away from God’s best*
 - Take sex for example, this is one of the desires of the flesh and desire of the eyes that has been distorted maybe even more so than anything else
 - And it has been so distorted that even young Christians have such a hard time understanding why sex should be abstained from before marriage.
 - And we just say, “Well the Bible says so, so don’t do it”...and we have a hard time really explaining why ourselves?
 - However, as soon as you take sex outside of the marriage commitment, it’s no longer about giving yourself for someone else, it becomes

solely self pleasing. It's only about getting what you want.

- And as Francis Chan says, the core of every sin is selfishness.
- When you take that selfish mentality into a marriage commitment, the perception of what sex is supposed to be gets completely distorted and leads to damaging relational problems.
- We need to understand the importance of building character and integrity in the formative years of singleness to better prepare us and our young people to be the best we can be in the future
- It's a spiritual truth but it's also a practical truth as well. Did you know that the Frontal Cortex part of the brain is not done developing until the age of 25...
- **Frontal Cortex: the part of the brain that helps control reasoning and is essential for**

the development of coordinated thought, action, and behavior.

- Therefore, the decisions you make and the actions you take in the early formative years of your life, begin to create a pattern for your thought process going forward
 - Example: When you were a teenager, every time you wanted to have "fun" there was always alcohol involved. Now you think the only way you can have fun is if your drinking or being impaired in some way
 - There was a study a while back on men who had affairs, specifically youths pastors who had fallen into affairs:
 - The overwhelming majority said that when they were younger,
 - "Oh I had my fun, I would sleep around, I would jump from relationship to relationship...then I got it together once I got married"...

- However, then in marriage, because they had set that pattern for their life early... whenever they seemed to lose the spark, whenever their relationship hit a rough patch, whenever there was a lull in the physical relationship... the initial reaction in the mind was to, jump to the next relationship or find that spark somewhere else
- It is so important to develop the character traits of patience, waiting, and obedience to God in the earlier formative years, so that it will form a pattern of faithfulness that will lead to healthy relationships for the rest of our lives.
- *Deut 6:3-4 Fear the Lord, Keep His Commandments so that...*
 - *your days may be long...it may go well with you*
- *God isn't wanting to keep anything from you...He wants to save you...He wants the best for you*
- Now, we can know that there are practical, logical, even scientific reasons to follow God's design for something like sex...however, God's saying so, should actually be enough
- We should learn to trust Him enough that He knows best! But that faith, is what satan wants to keep us from.
- Satan so desperately wants to distort God's design for sex, so that he can distort God's design for marriage which is supposed to be a picture of Jesus and the church.
- Therefore if he succeeds in distorting God design for sex and marriage, he can destroy families from the inside out...and he can distort our view of Jesus, Church, and God The Father Himself

- There is so much at stake here that Jesus allowed Himself to be tempted in every way that you are, so He could help you through it
 - You might ask, “Wait a minute, Kenny, you’re saying Jesus experienced sexual temptation?”
 - Yea, that’s what the Bible is saying! It says He was tempted in every respect, or in all points, just as we are! So if you’ve experienced the temptation, He’s experienced the temptation as well
 - Yet, he did not allow the temptation to draw Him away from God’s best and He stayed without sin.
- Now, some of us might be starting to fall victim to the lies of condemnation at this point.
 - Some of us are starting to think about the ways that we fell short, allowed ourselves to be drawn away by temptation into sin
 - How we have fallen victim to the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life.
 - And we’re starting to think about how we’ve failed and how it’s too late for us!
- However, that is not the Gospel...and John also clarifies at the beginning of 1 John 2:
 - ***My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” -1 John 2:1 (NKJV)***
 - This word advocate, is actually the same word that is used to describe the Holy Spirit as our comforter.
 - By definition it is ***Advocate (paraklētōs): one who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor***

- Again, this is another way of Him being seen as our Great High Priest, going before us, pleading our cause
 - Although He did not fall victim to the weakness of the flesh, He understands what it's like to live in the weakness of the flesh
 - And like it says in verse 2 of chapter 5, He can deal gently with us who have been ignorant and wayward because He Himself had been beset with weakness as well.
- He was the Great High Priest chosen by God to act of our behalf before The Father, and He didn't just offer up an animal or some sort of temporary sacrifice, He offered up the gift of Himself to be sacrificed for our sins
- And in doing so, He turned the Throne of Judgement into the Throne of Grace.
- So that now, in spite of how we have fallen, or how often we had been drawn away we can turn to Jesus to be our High Priest, our Advocate, our Intercessor who can lead us to the very Presence of God
- Which is why the writer says, ***“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” -Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)***
- So we have a High Priest that sympathizes, we have a High Priest that feels our pain and knows our struggle, and:
 - **WE HAVE A HIGH PRIEST THAT LEADS US TO THE FATHER WHO IS HERE TO HELP**
 - You see, Jesus isn't up in heaven as our advocate and intercessor just constantly making excuses for us, begging God not to be mad at us.
 - No, just as Austin took me before Rachel... Jesus is here to take us before the Father.
 - And when we get before the Throne of Almighty God we are not met with condemnation and accusations, we are met with, “How can I help?”

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- And whenever we draw near to Him, we find the greatest escape of temptation we can ever find
- Because instead of focusing on everything we're not supposed to be doing, we're instead focusing on who we are with.
- Whenever I was younger, we were living in Harrisburg, PA and every year they would have the farm show come to town
 - This was where all of the northern red necks would bring all of their farm animals and equipment and would have a big show at the convention center downtown
- Now whenever dad would take us to the farm show, he would have us 5 kids together...he wouldn't point out all of the places we shouldn't go and what we shouldn't do. He just had one rule, just stay with dad. Stay close to dad!
 - You see so many Christians navigate this life as if we're supposed to focus on all of the things we're not supposed to do and the
places we're not supposed to go, but really the Christian life is supposed to be summed up in, just stay close to the Father!
- But I remember one year at the farm show, we were walking around, staying close to dad. But I was an easily distracted kid, to put it mildly.
- And at one point I turned and looked at something else. I don't remember exactly what it was, it could have some sort of weird looking goat or something I got into a stare off with.
 - So I'm just staring at things thing, it's staring back at me, and then when I came to...I looked around and I couldn't see my dad anywhere!
 - And so started I wandered around this farm show just lost, confused, and scared for who knows how long.
 - I couldn't stop and enjoy anything that was going on at the show, because I wasn't with who I was supposed to be with.

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- So finally I gave up wandering around trying to find my family on my own, and I just went back to the one place that I could remember us being together. That was the car.
 - I thought if there was one place I could find dad, or dad could more accurately find me, it was going to be at his car.
- So I just sat there by the car for a little while, and eventually I saw dad coming. And if I'm honest, I thought I was in biiigggg trouble.
 - I didn't do what I was supposed to do, I didn't stay with dad, I messed up, I disappointed him.
 - However, whenever dad got to me, I wasn't in trouble. Instead I was met with a big hug! He said, "Are you ok?" He let out a big sigh of relief and again said, "Now stay with me..."
- Some of us have had those times where we just lost sight of our Father
 - It wasn't some intentional act of defiance, we just got complacent and took our eyes off of Him
 - And as a result we just found ourselves lost and confused and wandering around
 - And some of us have come to church because you thought this could be a place where He might be
- But we're still nervous that if we really find Him, and Go before Him we're going to be in trouble
 - We didn't do what we were supposed to do, we didn't stay with Him, we messed up, we disappointed him.
 - But I'm here to tell you, you find Him at the throne of Grace. And you're met with a Big Hug, A sigh of Relief, and "Now, Stay with Me"
- It is God's great pleasure and deep desire to give you mercy and show you grace in your time of need.

- **Mercy** by definition is; **God's kindness or good will toward the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them;**
 - Whatever has been making you miserable, whatever has been afflicting you...whether it be the effects of your own poor choices, or whether it be outside influences beyond your control
 - It is God's good pleasure to relieve you of the effects of them by showing you kindness, love, and compassion in His presence
- It is His good pleasure to show you Grace
 - To bestow His favor on you when you don't deserve it
 - To offer His forgiveness to you when when you haven't earned it
 - And show you complete and utter acceptance
- And you can stand confident in that because Jesus has gone before you on your behalf, to make this relationship possible.