

But that isn't all. Even today Jesus is serving as our great high priest. He is our divine mediator, going between us and God every time we sin and pleading our case before him. Writing to Timothy, the Apostle Paul once said, *"There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus"* (1 Tm 2:5). The Apostle John wrote, *"If anybody does sin, we have an advocate,"* a defense attorney, *"with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins; and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world"* (1 Jn 2:1, 2). This is why we pray in Jesus' name. It's only through him, our big brother, and because of what he's done for us, that we can pray to God, confident that he is our loving heavenly Father and that we are his beloved children.

And it's especially when we're battling temptation that we can trust that he will hear our prayers and help us. Our text says, *"Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."* Jesus, who has endured every temptation possible, has promised that he won't let us be tempted beyond what we can bear with him helping us, that he is working everything in our lives for our good, and that he will strengthen us through his Word and Sacrament to resist all the attacks of the devil. So, pray! When the devil attacks you, when the world entices you, when your own sinful flesh tries to get the better of you, pray! Pray to your big brother, Jesus! Pray to the one who knows what you're going through, and rest assured that he hears and answers your every prayer! *"He is able to help those who are being tempted,"* God says in our text today. Jesus is your merciful and faithful high priest.

I'm one of nine children and was blessed by God with five brothers—four older, one younger. I love those who are still living and cherish my memories of the one who is not. But it's only of one that I can say, "What a brother I have in Jesus!" He came to bring me to glory—to take me to heaven. And he came as my merciful and faithful high priest—to make atonement for all of my sins, and—day after day, month after month, year after year—to plead my case before God. Dear friends in Christ, you can say the same. Say it of Jesus, who is not ashamed to call himself your big brother: "What a brother we have in Jesus!" Amen.

**Hebrews 2:10-18** – *Jesus, Our Brother, Like Us in Every Way*  
343, All Glory Be to God on High, 53, 61, 37  
12/30/18 – Pastor David M. Kuehl – St. Paul's, Muskego, WI

Having older siblings can make for some interesting relationships. As many of you know, God blessed my parents with nine children, seven of whom are still alive. I was number seven in line, having five brothers and three sisters. I can recall one of my older brothers occasionally ignoring me. If someone asked him about me, it was almost as if he was embarrassed to admit that he was my brother. Thankfully, we've both grown up, and we really do get along great.

I found it interesting remembering that, because our text today tells us that we all have a brother, one whose birthday we celebrated this past week, who isn't ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters. His name is Jesus, and today we're going to see:

### **What a Brother We Have in Jesus!**

- 1. He came to bring us to glory.**
- 2. He came to be our merciful and faithful high priest.**

1. 2000 years ago in Bethlehem, a unique baby was born. His parents named him Jesus, a word that means "Savior," because an angel had told Joseph, *"You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins"* (Mt 1:21). This Jesus, who is Immanuel, a word that means "God with us," took on our flesh and blood. He became a man, like us in every way—except that he had no sin. Why? Why would God come into our world as a man?

We need to backtrack in history to answer that question. In fact, we need to go all the way back to the beginning, some 4000 years before Bethlehem, to the Garden of Eden. It was there that God put the first two human beings he created, Adam and Eve. And it was there that they sinned against God by eating the fruit of the tree that God had forbidden them to eat. Our first parents rebelled against the God who had lovingly created them and wanted nothing but the best for them. And, sad to say, we've kept that record of sin unbroken ever since. *"There is no one who does good, not even one"* (Ro 3:12), God says.

Our text tells us that through Jesus, who is God, everything in the world exists. John in his Gospel says, *"Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made"* (1:3). But what do we do? We rebel against the one who created us and who lovingly cares for us, provides for us, and protects us.

How do we do that, you ask? We doubt God's love and protection. How many of us can't sleep at night because we're afraid? We worry about things and stuff. We put our family, our job, and our money before God and his Word. We're terrified of dying. The inspired author of our text hits the proverbial nail on the head, when he says that **"all our life through we are held in slavery by our fear of death."**

But through his inspired Word, God tells us that Jesus' purpose in coming into the world was to bring us to glory, in the words of our text, **"to break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."** Jesus came to bring us to glory, to take us to heaven. Our text says that Jesus is the one who makes us holy. Jesus came to restore God's holiness to us, the same holiness that Adam and Eve possessed when God created them in his image, and that they lost when they sinned. Jesus came to set us free from our slavery to sin, fear, and death. We're no longer slaves, but free. Heaven is our home.

This was God's plan from the beginning. After Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, God came to them and promised to send them a Savior. He promised to send someone who would destroy the power of death and the devil. God said to Satan, **"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gn 3:15).** This Savior would be the "offspring" of a woman, a man, our brother in humanity. He would take our place under the law and live the life of perfection that we cannot. And he would take our sin to the cross and pay for it there. He would undo what Adam and Eve had done. **"The reason the Son of God appeared,"** God tells us, **"was to destroy the devil's work" (1 Jn 3:8).** All of this was God's plan.

And so, God truly is the author of our salvation. He planned it, and he accomplished it for us in Jesus. Our text calls Jesus **"the pioneer of our salvation."** The Greek for the word "pioneer" has the idea of someone who prepares and leads the way. That's what Jesus has done for us. Our big brother, who says of himself, **"I am the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6),** came to bring us to glory.

Yes, the almighty and eternal God humbled himself to take on our human flesh and blood. Jesus became our brother to bring us to glory, to save us from our sin. That's true brotherly love; that's perfect brotherly love. But our text also tells us that Jesus came as our brother to serve as our merciful and faithful high priest.

2. An interesting aspect of the book of Hebrews is that it shows us how Jesus is the fulfillment of many Old Testament types, or pictures of things that are yet to come in the New Testament. Here we have one of them: Jesus is our merciful and faithful high priest. For us to understand and appreciate what this means, we need to review what the high priests did in the Old Testament.

The high priests were chosen from the tribe of Levi. They served God primarily by offering up sacrifices for the people and by praying for them. The greatest day of sacrifice for the high priest was the great Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the only day in the entire year when he could enter into the Most Holy Place of the temple and make atonement for the sins of the Israelites. We see that word in our text today, where we're told that Jesus **"made atonement for the sins of the people."** The word "atonement" is an easy one to understand, if you just change how you pronounce it: *at-one-ment*. Say it with me: *at-one-ment*. The high priest would sprinkle the blood of a lamb on the altar in the temple to make this at-one-ment for the people.

But the fact of the matter is that the sacrifices of the Old Testament, in and of themselves, couldn't pay for a single sin, to say nothing of all the sins of all the people. They couldn't put the people in a state of at-one-ment with God. All that the sacrifices of the Old Testament could do was serve as types, or pictures of the perfect sacrifice made by the perfect high priest that was yet to come. More on that later.

The Old Testament high priest also served as mediator, or go-between, between God and his people. He offered up prayers for the people as he burned incense in the temple. The smoke rising up from the incense pictured the prayers of the people rising up to God. So, the high priest served in two ways. He offered up sacrifices for the people, and he offered up prayers for them before God

Now, back to how Jesus served as our great high priest. He did what no Old Testament high priest could ever do. He made perfect atonement for the sins of all people of all time, including you, including me. Peter tells us that he was a **"lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Pt 1:19).** As the perfect and sinless Lamb of God, Jesus offered himself up on the cross to make atonement for all of our sins. By sacrificing himself, Jesus destroyed the power of death and the devil. As a result, our sins are forgiven. We are in a state of at-one-ment with God. The Apostle John says, **"The blood of Jesus, [God's] Son, purifies us from every sin" (1 Jn 1:7).** We are washed clean, or "holy," as our text says. We are at peace with God.