

“The Incarnation Impacts the Most Important Things” | Hebrews 2:14-18

Preached on December 3, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 2, verses 14-18 today. *[pause]*

We are taking about a month-long break from the gospel of Matthew to do a Christmas series.

And I’ve decided to do a series talking about some of the ways that the incarnation of Christ impacts our lives. *[pause]*

So today, we will see how the incarnation impacts the most important things in our lives.
[pauseeee]

There are various opinions about what the most important problems are that need to be addressed in our world. *[pause]*

I looked up what people believe to be the most important issues facing the United States today, and what I saw was interesting.¹ [pause]

I saw things such as inflation and the economy, as well as health care.

I also saw immigration and climate change up there, too. [pause]

I’m sure there would be others who believe that our biggest issue is education, so if only we had better education, then all of life’s problems would fade away. *[pause]*

For others, social reform is the top priority, so they become activists for social reform, seeing that as the solution to what ails us.

They get passionate and become heated over gun reform and policing reform.

But isn’t it interesting what people leave out as the biggest issues facing us? [pause]

How often do we hear people say, “Our biggest problem is our sin.”?

Or, “Our biggest problem is that we are slaves to the fear of death.”? [pause]

Yet sin and death are truly sinful humanity’s biggest problems, but what we will find this morning in our passage is that because of the birth of Christ, they have been able to be dealt with.

Let’s READ our text for today. [READ]

The main idea that we see in this passage is that...

¹ Resources viewed: <https://www.statista.com/chart/10278/the-most-important-issues-facing-the-us-today/>,
<https://today.yougov.com/topics/politics/trackers/most-important-issues-facing-the-us/>,
<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/04/15/americans-views-of-the-problems-facing-the-nation/>.

➤ **Christ became like us to help us.**

What a profound truth!

What a succinct way to describe the mission of Christ! *[pause]*

But to understand that statement, it will never make any sense unless you first understand that you *needed* help. *[pause]*

Many people think that they don't need help with anything, they are "just fine on their own, thank you".

They refuse help of any kind, and just try to do everything themselves because they think that they can do anything they set their mind to. *[pause]*

This mentality seeps into spiritual matters.

They do not understand that they are sinners in need of saving, for they think their good will outweigh their bad. *[pause]*

They believe that they can do enough on their own to be fine with God.

But that understanding is deeply and tragically mistaken. *[pause]*

We are all sinners, who can't save ourselves.

No amount of good works will ever outweigh our bad, for if you fail in one point of the Law, you have become guilty of all of it.²

And therefore, all of us deserve eternal punishment, for we have sinned against the good, and perfectly holy God, who created us. *[pause]*

We could never save ourselves, and we were on our way to Hell, and that's why we needed *help*. *[pauseeee]*

This was not some minor help we needed, like just a little helping hand to hold something while we did the work.

No, this was not minor help, but saving help. *[pause]*

This was not some temporary help, where we just needed a moment of someone holding something heavy, and then we could carry it the rest of the way.

No, this was not temporary help, but eternal help. *[pause]*

² A reference to James 2:10.

This was not some unnecessary help, where it's nice to get some help, but we didn't really need it.

No, this was not unnecessary help, but absolutely needed help. *[pause]*

We needed saving, eternal help and help was sent through Jesus Christ! *[pause]*

Look at verse 16, "For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham." *[pause]*

The word translated as 'help' here refers to someone taking a hold of or grabbing someone to help them.

It's the same word that God uses to refer to Himself taking Israel by the hand to bring them out of Egypt.³ *[pause]*

Christ didn't just leave us our own and not help.

He didn't even stand at a distance and yell at us to save ourselves, but He takes a hold of us by the hand to save us. *[pauseeee]*

Yet how did this saving help come to us?

Look at verse 14, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things..."

Then look down at verse 17, "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect..." *[pause]*

In order for this help to come, Jesus had to become like us by taking on flesh. *[pause]*

You see, the incarnation is a continual reminder of the eternal, saving help that we have received in Christ Jesus.

Help came in the form of a baby being born. *[pauseeee]*

We are flesh and blood, so Jesus partook of the same things, meaning, He became flesh and blood, too. *[pause]*

He has always existed as the eternal, divine Son, but in the incarnation, He also added on to himself a human nature.

He was made like us in every respect, yet without sin. *[pauseee]*

Do you understand the monumental truth of what this is saying?!

³ See Hebrews 8:9.

Jesus did not merely *appear* as human.

He was not some “artificial” human, but He was fully human.

He was made like us in *every respect*. *[pause]*

Just think about that.

He experienced what it was like to be human.

To laugh and smile, but also to suffer, to be hungry, to thirst, to cry, to be hurt, to be tired.

He experienced everything of what it means to be human, yet without sin. *[pause]*

The One who created the world and upholds it by the power of his word came and was born as a human baby in the very world He created and upholds. *[pauseeee]*

The incarnation of Christ is truly remarkable, unique, and extraordinary.

Christ became like us, not to just come and enjoy some of the good things of being a human.

Not to just say ‘Hi’.

Not to teach us a lesson and beat us up, spit on us, and humiliate us for what we have done to Him.

But to *help us*. *[pause]*

And yet even though He came to help, He was the one beat up, spit on, and humiliated by us, even though He didn’t do anything wrong.

The helper of humanity was hurt by humanity, and killed by humanity.

But that’s the thing, though, His help came in the form of dying and for the purpose of dying. *[pause]*

He became like us to help us...

I. Deal with our death problem.

Verse 14 shares with us that He partook of flesh and blood “that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” *[pauseeee]*

Ever since the Fall in Genesis 3, death has loomed over all of humanity. *[pause]*

It’s not that humans are only susceptible to death, but humans die.

Physical death comes knocking for every human being, and it comes knocking at various ages, in various situations, and at various times. *[pause]*

For some, it's just around the corner, for others it's down the road, but for all it hovers over us. *[pause]*

No matter how much we try to prevent death, it doesn't work.

We may delay death momentarily at times, but it comes. *[pause]*

Death is one of the biggest issues facing humanity, yet we are incapable of solving it.

There have been thousands upon thousands of years of history, yet not one person has been able to come up with a way to beat death.

Death looms over each of us. *[pause]*

We are told that Satan has the power of death.

His power is seen in how he incites people to sin, which leads to death, just think of how he did that with Adam and Eve.

All Satan has to do is to tempt people long enough to die without Christ and remain in their sin and the result is that they receive eternal death. *[pause]*

He also accuses people of their deserved judgment, and reminds them that they are facing condemnation.

And in this way, he enslaves people by causing them to live in lifelong fear of death. *[pauseeee]*

This is a reality that we don't always notice, but it's always there: people are enslaved to the fear of death. *[pauseeeee]*

Sometimes we see this fear of death clearly, as we recently witnessed this with Covid, as people were absolutely petrified of death. *[pause]*

Yet there are other times where it's there, but it's hidden.

We don't always see it because some people try to push down or avoid the thought of death.

Yet that is evidence of their enslavement. *[pause]*

As one commentator put it, "The devil's lie is to convince many that they can avoid such experiences by amassing wealth, maintaining youth by strenuous exercise or expensive treatments..."

... Searching for adventure, falling in and out of love, gaining the marks of success, indulging in widespread travel, satisfying every whim, and so forth.”⁴ *[pause]*

People try to cover up and push down their fear with experience and things.

They try to avoid thinking of it at all costs because as Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown state, “Death, viewed apart from Christ, can only fill with horror, if the sinner dares to think.”⁵ *[pauseeee]*

For anyone who hasn’t believed the gospel, death is truly a frightening reality!

No wonder people try to avoid it and push down the thought of it!

But that just goes to show their fear of death is ever present, and what a miserable way to live! *[pauseeee]*

Yet what do we find with Christ?

He became like us so that he has destroyed the power of the Devil, and delivered us from that enslavement to fear of death. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus won by dying.

Since He took on flesh, He was able to die for us, bearing the curse that we deserved, and paying our penalty.

Through Him, we have eternal life because He already paid our death penalty.

So although we physically die, yet shall we live eternally.⁶ *[pauseeee]*

He has destroyed the one who has power over death!

The word used here for ‘destroyed’ really means that He has rendered the devil powerless, made his power of no effect, and useless. *[pause]*

Satan has no power to accuse Christians anymore!

Satan’s weapon of death has been rendered more useless than a water gun against a Christian!

He can’t terrify Christians anymore with death, for we know that we won’t ever face condemnation, but our physical death leads us to be with Christ. *[pause]*

⁴ Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1992), Heb 2:14–18.

⁵ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 445.

⁶ A reference to John 11:25.

So if he ever reminds us that we will die, we can simply say, “I’ve got eternal life. Good try.”
[pauseeee]

It is because of Jesus’ incarnation that made the cross possible.

For only because of the incarnation could He die through crucifixion, and deliver us from the grip of the fear of death. *[pauseeee]*

The truth behind Christmas is a celebration of victory in the face of Satan that He has been rendered powerless and has lost myriads of slaves.

The baby born in a manger would go on to hang on a cross, and Satan would lose by both the birth and death of One named Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

Are you fearing death?

Remind yourself this Christmas that Christ took on flesh to deal with your death problem.

For those who trust in Jesus, you may die physically, but you will live on into eternity with Christ, not having to face condemnation for your sin. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus became like us to help us by dealing with our death problem, but secondly...

II. To deal with our sin problem.

I want you to imagine two people who own a car and their car’s engine is completely shot - it’s broken and the car won’t run. *[pause]*

Now what would you think if the people kept looking for solutions like, “What if we fixed the scratch in the car door, maybe then the car will run.”

Or, “What if we hit the dashboard a couple times, do you think it will start up then?”

Or, “Maybe it just needs more oil and gas, let’s try that.” *[pause]*

We would think they were absolute fools, for they are ignorant of the root issue: the engine is broken!

None of their solutions will do any good when the engine is the problem. *[pauseeee]*

That’s the same sort of thing that many in our world do with sin.

Many in our world do not consider sin to be the problem, and so they are like those people with the car.

They avoid the root issue, and try to find all of these solutions that will do no good because they refuse to focus on the root issue. *[pause]*

Yet the Bible presents sin as the root problem of humanity's issues.

It is not only the problem that causes our relational and societal issues, but it's also the fundamental problem between us and God. *[pauseee]*

You see, the truth behind Christmas will only make sense if you understand that our sin against God needed to be dealt with. *[pause]*

This is why some people don't even want to focus on Jesus, but simply focus on Santa, or just the jolly good cheer of the holidays - because they don't truly understand *why* He came.

This is why some people don't actually *get* the meaning of Christmas, but just smile at the manger scenes and move on with their lives - because they don't truly understand *why* He came. *[pause]*

Christmas is actually a reminder that our sin problem was a problem. *[pause]*

Why else did He come?

He didn't come so that we could have nice manger scenes and move on with our lives.

He didn't come so that we could have another holiday to enjoy and get off of work. *[pause]*

Why was He in the manger?!

Verse 17, "He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." *[pause]*

There you have it: the reason for the incarnation was to make propitiation for our sins. *[pause]*

Now you may be thinking, "What does that even mean!?"

Let me explain. *[pause]*

We have all sinned, and we deserve death.

Our sin has put separation between us and God, for God is holy and just. *[pause]*

Well what do you see in the Old Testament?

There were priests who represented humans with God, and they were able to approach God, and sacrifice an animal on the people's behalf, atoning for the sins of the people. *[pause]*

Well in order to represent humans with God, the priest had to be human, right?

You can only represent a group that you are actually a part of. *[pause]*

So what we find is that in order for Jesus to be our high priest, he had to be made like us in every respect.

That way, He could represent us before God. *[pause]*

So He came and was born as a human to represent us, but what's the priest's role? To make propitiation for the sins of the people.

That is, He provides the atoning sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of God against our sin. *[pause]*

That's what Jesus did!

He took on flesh, and became our high priest, who represented us before God.

He then laid down His own life as the sacrifice to satisfy God's wrath against our sin.

That's why Jesus had to be born in the manger! *[pause]*

He was born to represent us, but not only that, He was born to die for us, so as to deal with our sin problem before God.

This was all only possible because He was made like us in every respect! *[pauseeee]*

We couldn't represent ourselves or find a qualified representative among us to finally take care of sin, but we needed God to come down, take on flesh, and represent us as a human.

That's how much of a dire situation that we were in!

And that's how much God loved us and showed His grace towards us, for we couldn't do it on our own, so God did it Himself!

He became the merciful and faithful high priest that we needed. *[pauseeee]*

Think with me if you had an *unmerciful* high priest.

He wouldn't really care about the people and their sin problem, but would look at them with disgust or below him. *[pause]*

Or think about having an unfaithful high priest - that does you no good.

What good is an unfaithful high priest, who doesn't do the job right? *[pause]*

No, Jesus became both our merciful *and* faithful high priest. *[pauseeee]*

Now we often think of Jesus as being faithful in what He did, for He certainly faithfully carried out His mission - praise God!

But how often do we remember that He is a *merciful* high priest? *[pause]*

Maybe this has shown up in your life, when you have thought: “Christ may love me, but He probably doesn’t like me.”

Or, “He is probably so upset and angry at my continual struggles.”

That’s not true, for He is a *merciful* high priest! *[pause]*

He didn’t take care of our sins begrudgingly, but mercifully.

He looked upon us with mercy, and was born into this sin-cursed world.

He looked upon us with mercy, and was nailed to the Cross to be our substitute, representing us there.

And if He showed mercy and faithfulness there, then don’t you think He will show you mercy and faithfulness in your struggles today? *[pause]*

Verse 18 says, “For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” *[pauseeee]*

He suffered and faced temptation just like us.

He went through those things and personally experienced what it is like to suffer, go through trials and temptations, yet without sin. *[pauseeee]*

I want you to really think about this truth...

God the Son has actually been through the same things that you go through. *[pause]*

He understands what it’s like to go through them as a human - that’s mind boggling, yet so deeply encouraging. *[pause]*

Later on in Hebrews, it says that He can sympathize with our weaknesses, so we should confidently go to the throne of grace and find grace to help in time of need.⁷ *[pauseeee]*

You feel burdened under suffering? Look to Christ who suffered, too.

You feel overwhelmed by temptation? Look no further than the one who never sinned, but went through temptation like us.

He can help you in your hardships, for He likewise went through the same sorts of things. *[pauseeee]*

In your temptations, trials, and hardships you can go to Christ and find a merciful and faithful high priest.

⁷ A reference to Hebrews 4:15-16.

He will look upon you with mercy and not disgust.

He will faithfully help you, and not give up on you. *[pauseeee]*

Do you need encouragement, strength, or help today?

Go to your merciful and faithful high priest, who cares and who has gone before you, experiencing the same sorts of things! *[pauseeeee]*

Sometimes we can think of Jesus looking at our tough situations and think that He would say, “Come on, just toughen up.”

But He is a sympathizing and merciful high priest, who more so says, “I went through the same sort of thing. It feels so hard, doesn’t it? I know what it’s like, and I want to help you today.” *[pauseeeee]*

Christ became like us to help us by dealing with our death and sin problem, and because He became like us, He can continue to help us even today!

Help has come because of what we celebrate at Christmas.

So everytime that you celebrate Christmas, or everytime that you see a manger scene, remember that ‘help has come’.

Satan-destroying, fear of death-relieving, wrath-satisfying, sin-atoning help has come in the baby being born.

All because...

The incarnation of Jesus made salvation possible! *[pause]*

Jesus had to be made like us.

How else would we have someone to represent us, and once-for-all atone for our sins?

How else would we have someone pay the death penalty that we deserved, so we could have life?

It was the incarnation that made all of that possible. *[pause]*

He came not merely to be a nice example, but to deal with our biggest problems: sin, Satan, and death.

And that’s why the incarnation impacts the most important things. *[pause]*

So this Christmas, be reminded of *why* Christ came: it was necessary to give us saving, eternal help.

So rest in the knowledge that you no longer have to fear death, for the God-man, Jesus Christ, came and died in your place.

And that means that as you face your physical death, you can confidently know that death is not the end because Christ came and was born and died for you to have life. *[pause]*

Rejoice in the fact that your sin problem before God has been dealt with, and you no longer stand in your sins and under condemnation.

So when Satan tries to accuse you, remember Christmas: Jesus became like you to make you right with God. *[pause]*

And be refreshed, knowing that this Christ is able to mercifully and faithfully help you today.

Will you go to Him?