

Dependable Priest

by Jim Cymbala

We have a dependable priest in Jesus Christ, who is our great high priest, compassionate high priest, and representative to the Father.

Duration: 55:37

Scripture: Proverbs 28:13, Jeremiah 33:3, Matthew 21:13, Romans 3:23, Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 4:16, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Jesus Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on Hebrews 4:14 and the concept of Jesus as a dependable high priest. He emphasizes the importance of holding firmly to our faith and reminds the congregation that Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses because he was tempted in every way, yet remained without sin. The preacher encourages the congregation to come to the throne of grace for freedom from guilt, cleansing through the blood, and encouragement and strength for their challenges. He invites those who feel the message is for them to stand up and come forward for prayer, symbolizing the throne of grace.

Transcript

Amen. Let's open our Bibles to Hebrews, the fourth chapter. Hebrews is toward the back of the New Testament.

Past Thessalonians, first and second, and Timothy and Titus. And you will arrive after the book, the tiny book of Philemon, you will get to Hebrews. Chapter four, great passage of Scripture.

Hebrews 4, verse 14. We're going to get to a very disputed piece of property when it comes to spiritual warfare. But the name of this message is, A Dependable Priest.

Verse 14, chapter four, Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. Notice, hold firmly to the faith we possess. For 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.

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. The biggest scandal in the history of the Catholic Church, well, at least in modern history, has been the revealing of some very dark and terrible secrets that people have been holding onto inside of them. Men, some women, mostly men, have come forward and said that the very

person that they trusted, the priest, was the one who was a predator, took advantage of them.

And now some are in therapy, some are wounded. They say beyond healing in their minds. Parents don't know what to think.

Giving in the Catholic Church is down. Attendance is down to mass. I've been up in Boston twice within the last three, four weeks, and that was the state and that was the parish that was hit the hardest by these revelations.

So now people are saying this, where can you find a priest that you can trust? But there are scandals among ministers and Protestant ministers, Baptists, Charismatic, Episcopal. I remember being on the Lower East Side with my friend Pastor Maldonado some years ago, and we were looking for some space for his church to rent when he was working there. And we went into a certain church, I'll leave out what kind it was, and the clergy that were there, we walked into their office, they weren't expecting us.

The secretary just told us to walk in, and when we walked in, both of them were pouring over, excuse what I'm going to say now, it's not something so nice, but they were pouring over catalogs for men's underwear, with these male models wearing these briefs, and there was a very, very bad vibe in that room. And they happened to be running when we walked in, an after-school program, and when I saw all those young children, those young boys, and I checked out these two guys, and saw those magazines, and just their uncomfortableness with the way we walked in on them. I said, Oh God have mercy.

Well, I want to tell you about a priest that you can trust, and that you can go to 24-7. The phone line is never busy. He never takes a vacation.

How many say hallelujah to that? Never has off hours. Now Hebrews was written to explain to Jewish believers, the better covenant, and to others, but especially Jewish believers, the better covenant that they have through Jesus Christ, compared to the covenant of the law. Now, the law was given by Moses, and was delivered through angels, so at the beginning of Hebrews, the Bible tells us in these passages, that Jesus is seen as greater than angels, and He has seen the Son of God greater than Moses.

And now, the writer of Hebrews, is going to go and show that He's greater than the priest. You see, every Jewish person knew that you needed a priest. God had said this in the old covenant, in the law, that the people could not approach God, could never go into the Holy of Holies, but somebody could represent them, to secure pardon, and to pray for them.

And it was the high priest, who went in to the Holy of Holies, just one day of the year, on the Day of Atonement. But there were other priests, but the high priest was the one who represented them in the most solemn way, and when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, Jewish people would attack their fellow Jews, who became Christians, and say, how could you become a Christian? Now you don't have a priest. You have nobody representing you.

When my grandmother, on my mother's side, my Polish grandmother, I had a Ukrainian grandmother, and a Polish grandmother. When my Polish grandmother got converted, she converted from generations of Catholicism in Poland, which is the most Catholic country in the world, along with the Philippines, highest percentage of Roman Catholics. And when my mother got saved, you know, grandmother got saved, you know Mike, that was a huge step for her.

The neighbors threw garbage on the lawn. They were considered radicals. My uncles, who I talked to once I got older, I didn't realize when I got older, the scarring that was in their minds from how they were treated in schools, because in a little small Polish mining town in Pennsylvania, you didn't leave the Catholic Church.

But one of the accusations was, to them was this, you don't have a priest. Now you don't have a priest. We have a priest with a turned around collar, now you don't have a priest, and my grandmother probably hadn't understood Hebrews yet, but I want you all to know that we have a great high priest, who represents us.

When Jesus died on the cross, I'm going to, because we worshipped and praised God, and I want to do something that was unburdened to do today, for somebody or some people here that need to hear this, I'm going to speak shorter and get to that ground that is fought over. Jesus, when he died on the cross, rose again from the dead on the third day, and he spent about 40 days off and on with the disciples, appearing, spending time with them. Then he ascended to the right hand of the Father, where the Bible says, he ever lives to make intercession for us, Allah, the high priest.

So when we say Jesus is here, when he says, well two or three, I gather he's here, he means the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself, the resurrected Savior of the world, he's seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father, and we're waiting for his return. And in the mystery of the Godhead, we find Jesus as a mediator, between God and the people that belong to him.

And the writer to the Hebrews says, I want you to know that we have a, not a priest, you don't have just a priest, we have a great high priest, who is the Son of God. A priest has his own sins to worry about, but the priest we have has never sinned. He's perfectly spotless.

He's the Lamb of God. The priest that you have here on earth, could have a bad day, his car could break down, he could be in a bad mood, he could have had a fight with his wife. In another context, he could be a predator, he could be a wolf in sheep's clothing.

But the great high priest that we have, who represents us to God, who is interested right now in not only, yes, praying for us, and in ministering the benefits of salvation, that's what Jesus is doing right now. This is a thought that not too many Christians dwell on. Jesus lives right now to make intercession for Carol and her daughter Susan, my daughter Susan, and my son-in-law Brian, and for my grandchildren.

While you were sleeping last night, Jesus was interceding for you. Before you even get up on the problem, Jesus knew it was coming, and is trying to prepare you for that problem. Oh, how many are happy we have a high priest? Let's put our hands together that we have a priest.

A priest. Come on, let's really thank God that we have a priest. I have a priest today.

We have a great high priest, the Son of the Living God. Not some man who lives for a few years, but the Son of the Living God is my priest. He not only is the sacrifice, he's the priest that offers the sacrifice.

What a mystery. He's everything. He's the lamb, but he's the priest.

And this priest is so different, the writer tells us, than the Jewish priest. The Jewish priest, once a year, there was a veil that separated the holy place where the rest of the priest could go, into the Holy of Holies. It was a thick veil.

That's the veil that was ripped in sunder on what day? Anybody who gets this right gets two weeks in Florida. The veil that was torn, it was torn and ripped open, and the Holy of Holies was revealed as not having the presence of God in it on what day? The day that Jesus died. And it was ripped from bottom to top or top to bottom? Top to bottom.

Why? So that nobody could say, somebody came in and cut it and ripped it. Human. Ripped from top to bottom, so everybody would know God did that.

Well anyway, that veil was the veil that the high priest, once a year, would go in into the Holy of Holies, where above the Ark of the Covenant, there was the Shekinah glory, the manifest presence of God. And he would go in, boy, sprinkling blood. God tells him in Exodus Leviticus, don't you ever appear without blood, for without the shedding of blood there is what? No remission of sin.

So on that day, the priest would come in, one day a year, and he would go in, his heart pounding, with bells on the bottom of his robe. And one of the reasons was that they would know if he was alive or dead. Because they had to haul some of those boys out of there.

They went in wrong. They got carried out horizontal. And they would go into the Holy of Holies, sprinkling blood, and there they would intercede, and they would represent the people and make atonement for the sins of the people.

And they would talk to God about the people, in the Holy of Holies, one day with the blood of a goat or a bull. So the writer to Hebrews says, we have a great high priest. He doesn't go through any veil in Jerusalem.

He went into the heavens of heavens, into the Holy of Holies in heaven, of which the earth was just a type. Jerusalem was just a type, a symbol. And he went in to represent us, not in some symbolic way.

He went into the very presence of God, representing us as our great high priest. He's right now in heaven, interceding, caring, keeping his eye on us. And when you start to wobble, he knows about your wobbling.

And when you're struggling with something, he knows about it. He's there as a priest to apply these benefits of the salvation. And he didn't offer the blood, hallelujah, he didn't offer the blood of some animal.

He offered in some mysterious way his own blood. And if God said in the Old Testament, when I see the blood, I will pass over you. What do you think he says when he sees the blood of his own son? Oh my.

Let's praise him again together. Hallelujah. For the blood that washes away all our sin.

So, when the devil accuses you about sin, you're not being humble by listening to it. If you let the devil accuse you about sins you've repented of, that's not humility. That's the devil accusing you of stuff that the blood of Jesus has washed away.

You are demeaning the ministry of Christ as Savior and as priest. If you and I dwell on sins that we committed this morning or last week or last year. When it's under the blood, it's all over.

Not only forgiven, but forgotten. Do I get a witness from the congregation? I don't care what you did. I don't care if you killed somebody.

When it's under the blood, it's under the blood. That's the battle my friend David Berkowitz is going through, son of Sam. Been saved since 87.

He killed nine girls as that serial killer. Became a Christian in 87. Went into prison in late 70s.

And he told Carol and I, I have a picture with me in my briefcase that's with me today. Two pictures of Carol and I with him in the slammer there where we visited him upstate. And he said, Pastor, that's what the devil does.

He never gives up. He keeps trying to bring those accusations against me because think of the terrible things I did possessed by the devil. Shot people I didn't know.

The .44 caliber killer. Paralyzed this whole city. And he said every week, every couple days, every month, the devil comes and tries to bring that all up to bring me under guilt and condemnation.

And I have to stand and say, I plead the blood. I plead the blood of Jesus. It's under the blood.

Christ died for my sins. They've been washed away. Satan, I resist you.

You want to know how to fight the devil? You got to fight him through the blood of the Lamb. And through the high priest that we have who lives to make intercession for me. He went into the heavens to appear for us.

Let me bring this to a close. It's an exhortation this morning. Now, the Bible tells us in this passage that he's not only a great high priest, but he is a compassionate high priest.

That he's not some otherworldly Jesus, glorified, eternal Son of God, but he's Jesus who became flesh, who is the Son of God, Emmanuel, God in the flesh. But he lived here on the earth. Why did he live here on the earth? Well, it later tells us, he had to live there so he could be a sympathetic high priest.

When Carol has a battle going on in her life, or when I have failed the Lord, the Bible says that if it was an absolutely other than human, glorified, supreme being kind of Jesus, which he is, but if he was only that, we would find it hard to approach him because he could never understand how weak we are and how the devil works here on earth to drag us down. But the Bible says here that we not only have a great high priest, but we have a compassionate high priest who was tempted like you and I are in every way. Listen, brother and sister, in every way.

Did you hear what the Bible said? In every way, but without sin. He knows what it is to fight against temptation. You think the devil attacks you? You think you got a rough road? How do you think the devil and his horde swarmed on Jesus? Some people think he only was tempted in the wilderness.

No, no, you didn't read one of the gospels. It says, and the devil left him until there came a more convenient season. Jesus was tempted.

He knew what it was to be let down by people. He had to fight off heartaches. He was tempted by evil thoughts.

They were presented to him. He never embraced one of them. He was spotless.

But to be tempted, you have to feel it. And the Bible says that's what's so great about our high priest. When you and I are going through it, we can run to Jesus and he sympathizes with our weakness.

He knew what it was to be flesh and blood like you and I are. He knows how weak we are. He knows how cunning the devil is.

I'm not excusing sin now. I'm telling you what the Bible says. That we have a high priest who sympathizes with our situation.

He has compassion on us. He has a fellow feeling, the Bible says. He is not unable to sympathize.

He is able to sympathize, for he has been tempted in every way just as we are. So we have an eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, high priest, who right now, while I'm speaking, represents me to the Father. We receive that by faith.

We can't figure out that and see it spatially in our minds. We receive it by faith. Jesus Christ is a priest, the great high priest for me and you.

See these babies that we gave to him? He's interceding for these babies even now. How many say amen? Oh yes he is. He's a faithful high priest, always available.

You know sometimes when Roman Catholics they have an accident and somebody's dead, they make believe they're not dead. So they can call a priest for the last rites of the church. The boy is dead.

But they pretend he's not dead, he has to get the last rites. But sometimes the priest gets caught up in traffic. But we have a high priest.

He's as close as the mention of his name. When you say his name, he is on the case. Come on, let's put our hands together one more time.

He's on the case, just saying Jesus. Okay. Now, in every battle, you know, Neil lives now in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

And near Chattanooga, he used to live in Nashville and in Nashville there were some of the greatest battles of the Civil War. In fact, more generals died in those battles in Nashville than any battles that were fought in the Civil War. Now, near Chattanooga, there's Lookout Mountain and some of these other places where there was some nasty fighting between the North and the South.

And one of the reasons why it took so long, well, there was bad generals that the North had, but one of the reasons it took so long for the North to overcome the South, beside possible divine reasons, that God was visiting the sins of slavery on the country as a whole. But militarily speaking, is that the Confederates always seemed to get the high ground. They would get positions that were just so tremendous for defense.

And back in those days, they didn't fight guerrilla warfare, they just charged at each other like a bunch of crazy people. And the Yankee soldiers were thrown into the battle in some of these really terrible things, Chico Magua and some of these other battles that you'll read about. I mean, they were cut down, they were cut down faster than you could imagine.

And even, and the Southerners charged sometimes unwisely, like at the Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, and some of the soldiers who killed them said, we almost, we almost got compassionate for the enemy because it was so insane. You couldn't fire and not kill somebody. They were just coming at you.

But that was the way they fought that. So who got the ground, the high ground? Who got the important ground? Determine who won. Because if you got the low ground and you were crazy enough to fight, you're going to lose.

That's what happened at the Battle of Gettysburg. The Northerners for once, for one of the few times, got the high ground. And Robert E. Lee and the other generals probably made a, historians say, a very unwise decision to go at that station, those station Union troops.

Well, in the battle of spiritual warfare, in the battles that involve spiritual warfare, here's the ground that's most fought over. Listen to me and then I'll let you go. But let's visit it before we go.

Therefore, since we have such a great high priest, seeing that all these things are true, he shed his blood for us. He represents us to the Father. He's compassionate.

He never sleeps. He never slumbers. Therefore, let us come boldly to the throne of grace.

No, every time you see therefore in the Bible, you always ask, wherefore? In other words, therefore is building on something. So what went before it? Because we have such a great high priest who went into the heavens for us, the Son of God, who has compassion because he walked on earth for 33 years. He was human in the mystery of the incarnation.

Because of all of that and because of God's love for us and because of who Christ is and what he stands for, let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace. The action, the ground that's fought over in spiritual warfare is the devil tries to keep us from the throne of grace. Jesus is a high priest trying to draw me every single day to the throne of grace.

He's trying to draw you today to the throne of grace because that's where the action is. That's where you get mercy. You don't get mercy by going to church.

You get mercy experienced by going to the throne of grace. You don't get grace operating in your life by listening to a gospel album. You get it only if the gospel album motivates you and inspires you to get to the throne of grace.

So listen. Let us therefore, us, us is first person plural. The writer is saying him too.

Let us therefore, therefore let us, let us come or go boldly. That means movement. What kind of movement? Not with your body, with your heart.

Us. Whether you're a preacher, whether you're Billy Graham, whether you're up in the balcony, whether you're downstairs, whether you're in the choir, whether you're Neal Joseph, no matter who you are, you're part of the us. You need to move to the throne of grace.

You gotta go there. It's not a place that stays with you. You gotta go there.

You gotta approach it. You gotta make visits. You gotta camp out near it.

You never get too far from it. Why? Because it's the source of strength and power and grace for the Christian. This is where Jesus is trying to woo me.

If he could only get my attention and cure me of my cardinality and my unbelief. Therefore let us come boldly. Don't come creeping.

Come boldly. Don't come saying come boldly. Therefore let us come boldly.

Why? Because you're not coming in your name. If you had to come in your name, don't even go. But we're coming in the name that's above every other name.

We're coming in the name of Jesus. God receives us in the name of Jesus. He is my high priest.

He's the one inviting me. Let us come boldly to the throne of grace. What does throne stand for? Power.

Sovereignty. Supreme power of God ruling the universe. But what kind of throne is it? Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace.

Say it with me. Throne of grace. Say it.

Throne of Say it louder. Throne of grace. God rules for the believer from a throne of grace.

Not a throne of judgment. That's a lie. It's a lie.

God doesn't want to judge you. He wants to help you. That's why he calls it a throne of grace.

If he wanted to kill you, he would have done it by now. It's a throne of grace. What does grace mean? Grace is the expression of God's love and his loving kindness to us.

It's always reaching out to help someone. It's a mother picking up a kid who keeps falling down as he learns to walk. It's a dad helping out a son or a daughter who can't meet their bills.

It's a doctor over a patient bringing healing and restoration to their body. Grace is always moving out to help the object that it loves. So the Bible says therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace to receive mercy.

Why would we need mercy? Because we sin. This is why this is the most hotly contested spot in the universe when it comes to spiritual warfare. If the devil can keep John or Mike Ford or Pastor Hammond from the throne of grace, they are cooked.

They will live in guilt for months or years because the only way you get rid of the guilt is by going to the throne of grace where you get mercy. Mercy runs at the throne of grace. Oh how many are happy we have a throne of grace.

That God, listen, God is inviting us to. Let us come boldly. Jesus, our high priest, is saying come daughter, come son.

Everything you need is at my father's throne. I'm wooing you, I'm drawing you, I've made the way so you can enter in boldly to receive mercy. Sins, yeah, Christians sin.

If any of you here don't sin anymore, God bless you. But I sin. I sin.

Since I'm a Christian I've made mistakes. I make daily mistakes. I say things I shouldn't say.

I don't say things I should say. I make mistakes as a husband. I make mistakes as a father.

I make mistakes as a grandfather. I spoil my grandkids. I need mercy.

And you're not angels either. Don't look at me like mine. I didn't think you were like that.

You're not so hot. How many need God's mercy every day? Come on, wave your hand at me. We need God's mercy.

Where do you get the mercy? At the throne of grace, praying to God, calling on God. It doesn't come automatically in a bottle or in a vapor. It comes at the throne of grace.

That's why this is so contested. You know, when you're playing basketball and you're a big man, these guys will understand what I'm talking about, some of the girls too. But when you're tall and you're big and you have to guard another guy, the coach will yell at you and sometimes a guy would take me underneath the basket and go low post.

And the whole fight is with your lower body and your legs to push him away from the basket before he gets it. Because once Shaquille O'Neal catches the ball just five feet from the basket, you're toast. So Armand Gilliam, my friend, is a Christian.

The hammer, they called him. He played in the league for 12 years and he told me because he was only 6'10", only. But he would guard 7'2", 7'3", players.

So he one time told me, Pastor, all year, all the off season, I work on a stair master and I just lift weights and I don't play much ball because you don't know the physical battle because when Shaq would just lean back on me, he would say, what does Shaquille go about, 3'40", 3'60"? Heavy. He'd say, when he would just lean back, he said, everything, you need everything, hold him back, don't let him get the spot. Once he gets the spot, you lose.

That's the throne of grace. Once we secure the throne of grace, the devil is cooked. Come on, let's put our hands together.

The throne of grace. Why? Because we receive mercy and grace. The number one battle in our lives, in my life, is keep me from the throne of grace.

Keep us in guilt. Keep us in condemnation. Keep us with that kind of somber moaning, no joy, no victory, no sense of, I'm clean.

That only comes at the throne of grace. And when you slip as a Christian and you do something, say something, get involved in something you shouldn't, the devil sends every demon he can to keep you, not in a physical place, but to keep you away from the throne of grace. He knows if you make it there, it's all over for him.

His accusations won't mean anything, because you'll be glorifying God for the blood that washes away all of your sins. Carol, if you're playing, one last thing. It's not just mercy which tells us, humbles us, that we need, imagine Christians, including the apostle who wrote this, said, let us come boldly to the throne of grace.

If you're here today and you don't feel your need for mercy, God really has to do something in your life. No matter how long you walk with the Lord, you always feel your need of mercy. Come on, do I get a witness here from everyone? You never get to the place where you look down at somebody else and say, my, what's wrong with that person? Because you know, they're but for the grace of God alone.

But not just receive mercy, but obtain grace. What's grace? Mercy takes care of the past tense. Grace helps me in the present tense challenges.

Neil needs grace to help him with wisdom to do the ministry he's involved in. I need grace to face the challenges, to face the financial challenges that we have here. I need grace.

You need grace just to ride on the number three train. You need grace. Come on, do I get a witness here? You need grace just to go to work, to face a lot of the junk that you have to go through.

You need grace. Help. Energy.

Wisdom. Endurance. Purity.

Name it. It's grace. Whatever you need now, today, you can get it at the throne of grace.

The devil will block you. He'll tell you you don't need it. He'll tell you it's too late.

He'll tell you you've done too many things wrong. He'll tell you that you're not ready. That's the biggest lie because you'll never be ready if you wait till you're ready.

You come just the way you are because it's a throne, hallelujah, of grace. No matter how soiled you are, you can come. Listen, these are the great battles.

These are the great battles that go on. Whatever happens in Iraq, that's going to be a child's play compared to the great battles that go on spiritually. In the spiritual realms, the devils, the demons, Satan, trying to block people from one.

Just don't let them get to the throne of grace. That's the way the devil does it. Come on, how many have ever been blocked? He tries to block you, yeah? Tries to get your mind on something else.

Tries to do anything because he knows once you get there and mercy starts flowing and grace from God, our high priest, oh, I want to just preach. Sylvia, get about five of your, get about five brothers to just come in. If you're here today and say, pastor, symbol of that message is like medicine.

I want, the devil's been messing. He comes like the accuser of the brethren. He comes as the condemner.

He tries to get me down, depressed, feeling guilt, and hear Jesus died that I wouldn't live that way, that I would have peace and joy. So I want to visit the throne of grace and I might need some help. And they'll, they'll pray you, they'll help you there.

See, sometimes you need a little encouragement to get there. Or maybe you're here battling and you, I mean, the devil has just thrown the kitchen sink at you. If you feel sorry for yourself, you're doing absolutely well symbolically.

Don't anyone else move? That's it. Choir members, balcony people. When the devil comes in, the enemy comes in like a flood.

The Lord raises up a standard. But where's that standard raised up? At the throne of grace. In the day of trouble, call upon me and I will answer you.

And I will show you great and mighty things. Freedom from guilt. Cleansing through the blood.

Encouragement and strength. Let it all roll. All has its place.

Put your hands, start to talk to God. Talk to God. Tell Him.

He knows. Come on. Open your mouth up and praise Him.

Lord, if there's anyone here who doesn't get saved at the throne of grace. The gook and the junk and the dirt that we collect as we walk through life. You are not unsympathetic.

We ask not just for mercy, but for today. Help us to live now day by day. God, you can't give me grace for next week because I don't have for today, Lord.

We all need grace for just the day we're living in. Give us this day our daily grace. Help us as a church and as individual people to live more.

Sit there in your presence, Lord, after mercy and grace have been dispensed.

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