

The Intercession of Christ

by John Vissers

Jesus Christ is our great high priest who understands our struggles and is able to help us because he has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.

Duration: 29:48

Scripture: John 21:15-19, Romans 8:26-37, Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 8:1-2

Topics: "Intercession"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the prevalence of humanism in the church today and the need to redirect people's focus to Jesus Christ. He encourages listeners to rely on Jesus as their source of strength and hope, and to embrace the gospel of grace. The speaker shares a personal experience of ministering to a dying teenager and highlights the importance of knowing how to pray and finding faith in difficult times. The sermon concludes with a reflection on the speaker's daughter's Father's Day card, highlighting the shared understanding and connection between a father and child.

Transcript

This morning I want to take a marvelous theme, take up a marvelous theme with you, and the theme is the intercession of Christ. And we're going to read, actually, two passages of Scripture. The first one from Hebrews, chapter 4, and we'll start reading at verse 14 through to the end of chapter, excuse me, through the end of verse 10 at chapter 5. And then I want to go back and read a few verses in Romans, chapter 8, reading at verse 31.

But first of all, Hebrews 4, which is on page 1186, I believe, in your pew Bibles. Let us hear God's word. 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, 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. Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.

This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. No one takes this honor upon himself. He must be called by God, just as Aaron was.

So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest, but God said to him, You are my son, today I have become your father. And he says in another place, You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. And then in Romans chapter 8, reading at verse 31 through to the end of verse 34, the Apostle Paul writes, What then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died.

More than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us. Amen. May God bless to us these readings from his inspired word this morning.

Let us bow in prayer. May it please you, O God, indeed to speak to us. Let us hear your blessed voice.

May the feeling of our deep need and the faith of your wondrous love combined with the sight of the wonderfully blessed life you are waiting to bestow upon us constrain us to listen and to obey as you speak, O blessed Savior, in the power of your Spirit. Amen. Like many pastors and teachers, I have learned my most important theological lessons in the daily struggles of ministry.

When I graduated from seminary some 20 years ago, my first pastoral assignment out on the West Coast included serving as the chaplain on the children's ward of the local hospital. And as a young minister, I often encountered the pain and the sorrow of families struggling with seriously ill and sometimes dying children. One morning, I got a call at home to come to the hospital immediately.

And when I arrived, I was directed to the room of a 16-year-old boy who was dying from cancer. He'd been sick for some time and it was painfully obvious that he had been brought back into the hospital to die and that there wasn't much that the doctors and the nurses could do other than to make him feel comfortable. And so I talked to him for a few minutes and I read some scripture with him and then I prayed with him.

And after we had finished praying together, he said to me, I'd like you to go out and to speak with my father. His father was out in the lounge. And so I went out and I spoke to the father.

And the father, as you can well imagine, was confused. The father was angry. The father was emotional.

And then he began to pour out his story. He had two children, this son who was dying and also a young daughter. And he'd been watching his son fight this cancer now for about three years.

And the stress on the family had taken its toll. And rather than drawing them together, he and his wife had separated. And he told me how he was desperate.

He didn't know how he could possibly face the future without his son, without his marriage, without his family. He'd been raised in a Christian home. He'd made a profession of faith in Christ as Savior as a young man.

But now he had drifted away from the church. And yet he desperately at this moment wanted to find faith. And he wanted to pray.

But he said to me, I can't pray. When I pray, the prayers just bounce off the ceiling back at me. I simply don't have the emotional and the spiritual strength to pray.

And I'm not even sure that if I do pray that God will hear me. I've drifted so far from him. And I realized that he was crying out to me and that he expected me to help in some way.

And I soon realized that as a 24-year-old minister right out of seminary, I was way in over my head. And so I mumbled something about God understanding. And I prayed for him.

And I continued to visit with him and have conversations with him and continued to visit with his son until the day the boy died. But I have to tell you that at that time and in that moment and in that circumstance, I felt like an absolute and utter failure as a pastor. I doubted that I had really helped this man at all.

I felt that I should have done so much more at a critical and crucial moment in his life. I should have been able to help him much more than I did. I should have been able to tell him how to find faith.

I should have been able to show him how to pray. I should have been able to help him dig down deeper within himself and find the spiritual resources to carry on as he faced this critical and crucial moment in his life. And I felt that I had failed him and his son and their family as a pastor and as a minister of the gospel.

But a few years later, I was involved in an intense study of the book of Hebrews. And as I began to work into this study of the book of Hebrews, there I found a portrait of Jesus which changed a good deal of how I thought about the Christian life and what I thought even pastoral ministry is all about. Because in the book of Hebrews, Jesus is portrayed as a great high priest.

And in the Old Testament, as you know, the high priests represented the people. They interceded for them. And once a year, the high priest, one elected from among the other priests, would pass through the inner veil of the temple into a place called the Holy of Holies.

And there, that high priest would appear for a few moments before God on behalf of the people. And as you begin to make your way into the book of Hebrews, you begin to realize that the book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is precisely this kind of a high priest. Hebrews 4.14 starts out that way.

We have a great high priest, but he hasn't just passed through some earthly veil into a temporary temple. He has passed through the heavens themselves. He has ascended to the highest place.

He has been appointed to represent us before God. He has offered up the once-for-all sacrifice for sin so that we might, with him, enter into the Holy of Holies. And the Bible says he did not take this honor upon himself.

He did not take the glory upon himself, but he was called by God. He is the Son of God, the eternal high priest appointed as the divine and eternal Son of God, a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Now this is a reference, this reference to Melchizedek to Genesis 14 and verse 18, as well as to Psalm

110 and verse 4, where we have this mysterious figure of Melchizedek in the Old Testament.

We don't know a lot about him other than that he was set apart as the rightful ruler of Jerusalem and the rightful priest of the Most High God. And Jesus stands in that great order of priesthood as ruler and king and as rightful priest of the Most High God. And the writer to the Hebrews says the same thing in chapter 6:20, where he says, Jesus who went before us has entered on our behalf.

He has become a high priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. And in Hebrews 7:25, therefore he is able to save us completely, those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. To intercede for them.

You see, Jesus here is portrayed as pure and blameless and worthy and set apart and exalted above the heavens. We have a high priest, the Bible says, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not made by human hands. And that's why in verse 14, the writer to the Hebrews says to us, we should hold fast to the faith we profess.

Why? Because it binds us to this Jesus Christ. The Christ who has been appointed to intercede for us. He is able to help us because he has been divinely appointed and he intercedes on our behalf.

But then look at verse 15. Because all this talk of heaven shouldn't make us think that Jesus is so exalted that he is far removed from us. In verse 15, the writer makes it clear that Jesus knows about our struggles in life, that Jesus has been through it all, through suffering and death and separation, and Jesus will carry us with him into the resurrection life.

He can sympathize with our weaknesses, the Bible says. He has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. Jesus hears our cries of desperation when we can't even seem to pray ourselves.

Do you sometimes feel that no one really understands you? That no one can really help you as you face the struggles and situations and the crises of your life? Last Sunday, I got a wonderfully thoughtful Father's Day card from my 10-year-old daughter, Jennifer. She had written it herself and it was filled with wonderful and thoughtful things. It was called, The Top 10 Reasons Why You Are Special, Daddy.

And I won't bore you with all 10 of them, but it was her top 10 list. Let me just share two of them with you. Number 10, you have a lot of the same allergies as I do, so you know how I feel.

And number 7, you are a lot like me, so you know when I need to be alone. And she's right. We've discovered that Jennifer and I share a great deal in common.

We are a lot alike in our temperament. And there have been times when it seemed to her that I was the only one in the family who might sympathize with her, who might be able to relate with her, who might come alongside her and just be with her in a quiet and yet important moment when something wasn't going perhaps just the way that she thought it should be going. And the Bible says that's exactly who Jesus is and what Jesus is like.

He is the one who understands. He is the one who sympathizes with us in our weaknesses. He was tempted as we are.

He struggled with life. Think about what that means. There is no problem.

There is no pain. There is no despair. There is no anxiety in your life with which Jesus cannot identify.

And think about what that means. This is the Jesus of the Bible. This is the Jesus of the Christian faith.

And when we find ourselves in the midst of life with all of our struggles, with all of our challenges, we have such a great high priest who comes alongside us, who intercedes on our behalf. But look again. Because Jesus is able to help us, yes, because he is the divinely appointed high priest as the Son of God, and yes, because he understands us, but he is also willing to help us.

Look at what verse 16 says. It reminds us that we can have confidence in the mercy and in the grace of God to help us in our time of need. Not only is Jesus able to help us, not only is he the one uniquely able and fitted to help us in our time of need, but the Bible says Jesus is wonderfully gracious and wonderfully willing to do so.

And the New Testament emphasizes this truth again and again and again. We are able to pray because Jesus first prays for us and with us and in us. The Scottish theologian James Torrance says this.

We pray in the name of Jesus because Jesus has gone before us. In our name, in our name he has lived a life agreeable to the will of God which we could not live. In our name he has confessed our sins.

In our name he died on the cross. In our name he was raised from the dead. And in our name he ascended to the right hand of the Father.

And in our name he now intercedes for us. You see, the Bible tells us this wonderful truth that Jesus prays for us, that Jesus prays with us, and that when we pray, we pray in his name and in him and with him, united with him by grace, we in him and he in us. And we're taken up into the heaven of heavens to intercede at the right hand of the throne of God.

It's not something we can do ourselves. It's not something we have of ourselves. It's something which we have in Christ.

In the Gospels, you'll remember that Jesus often prayed for his disciples. For example, he prayed, you'll remember, for Peter in the hour of temptation. Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.

And you'll remember, in fact, that Peter did stumble. And Peter did deny Christ three times. And yet, at the end of John's Gospel, there is that wonderful restoration of faith and love.

And in Romans 8, the Apostle Paul reminds us that we do not know how to pray, but the Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. Sometimes words just don't seem to be able to come to us. We can't articulate the deepest thoughts of our minds, or the deepest feelings of our heart, or the hungering of our soul.

But then the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. God knows, and Jesus prays for us by His Spirit. And a little later in Romans 8, in that passage that we read, Paul says that we are more than conquerors.

Why are we more than conquerors? Because somehow we can find strength on our own? No, because Christ is at the right hand of the Father and is interceding for us. And you remember that wonderful high priestly prayer of our Lord in John chapter 17, where first He prays for His disciples. And then, do you

notice what He prays for and who He prays for after He's finished praying for His disciples? He prays for all believers.

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message. Have you ever realized, have you ever thought about the fact that before He went to the cross of Calvary, Jesus prayed for you? He prayed for you before He went to the cross. So what do you do when you can't pray? What do you do when you can't seem to find the emotional and the spiritual strength to carry on? We live in a world that tells us we just need to try a little harder when we bump up against such challenges.

Some of us perhaps read self-help books on prayer. Some of us perhaps give up on our faith altogether for a little while and dismiss it as something that's irrelevant, or at least not something that can help us at this particular moment in our lives, something that really can't meet our needs when the chips are down. Some of us might turn to friends for help, and all of that is alright and okay.

But it's not the ultimate, and it's not the biblical answer. The Bible reminds us that we have a great high priest. And I want to tell you this morning, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, what I should have told that father in Lionsgate Hospital almost 20 years ago.

He had been walking up and down the halls of that hospital in North Vancouver, wanting to pray, trying to pray, but not knowing how to pray, wanting to find faith, but somehow he thought he couldn't. Somehow he thought it was ultimately up to him. But in Jesus Christ, he had someone who was already praying for him, and for his son, and for his family.

Someone who heard their groans and was interceding for them, and with them, and in them. And what he needed to hear was simply that Jesus Christ was there, and at the right hand of the Father. And he needed simply to trust, to place his full weight down upon that Jesus Christ.

And I learned an important lesson in that situation. And that is that my task as a pastor, and as a minister of the Gospel, is not and never to throw people back upon themselves by somehow exhorting them to try a little harder, or instructing them with some quick fix solution on how to meet their need. That's the way of the world.

It's sheer humanism. And the sad fact of the matter is that so much of what we do in the church today is just sheer humanism dressed up with religious and pious language. We need to point people to their only source of strength and hope, Jesus Christ.

To point them to the Gospel of grace, that they might look to him to lead them, to open their hearts in faith and in prayer, that they may abide in him, and that he might abide in them. As we conclude this morning, I want you to think about Jesus. What comes into your mind when you think about Jesus? In fact, as A.W. Tozer has reminded us, what comes into our minds when we think about God is in fact the most important thing about us.

What comes into your mind when you think about Jesus? What picture of Jesus do you have there? There are many images of Jesus in the Bible. Some of us think of Jesus as the good shepherd. Some of us think of Jesus as a prophetic teacher.

Some of us may think of Jesus as a stern judge. Some of us may think of Jesus as he stooped down and welcomed the children. Some of us have images of Jesus in our minds which come from paintings and pictures that we've been shown in Sunday school and over the years.

But I want to suggest to you this morning that the Bible invites us to think this way about Jesus. Think about Jesus as a great high priest. And imagine in your mind's eye that Jesus is in the heavens at the right hand of the Father praying for you.

Because, my friends, the good news of the Gospel is that this is precisely who Jesus is. And that that is precisely what he is doing. In the best of times and in the worst of times, Jesus prays for you.

And faith is nothing more and faith is nothing less than trusting in Jesus Christ as your great high priest. How can you not trust in such a Jesus? How can you not love such a Jesus? How can you not obey such a Jesus? Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, as we, a congregation of your people, sit in your holy presence, we acknowledge, Lord Jesus, that you are our great high priest, the one who has gone before us, the one who even now intercedes for us.

And so we praise you and thank you and express our love to you and embrace you with arms of faith outstretched and ask that you come and live in our hearts and in our families and in our congregation in a fresh and in a new and in a living way, that we might be in you and that you might be in us, our great high priest forever. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26684.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-vissers/the-intercession-of-christ/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net