

A Great High Priest

Jeremy Richards

13 September 2026

Okay, we're back in Hebrews. And we started Hebrews chapter four, and we started looking at Jesus the high priest. And the rest, or a good portion of Hebrews is going to be about this great high priest, this great high priest, Jesus Christ. And so in verse 14 is where we ended last week. It says, seeing that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Jesus is not described as just a high priest. He is a great high priest. And we're going to see that that ministry he has is great. It required a great high priest in order to accomplish that ministry. In the true tabernacle, it says that this great high priest has passed through the heavens, that there was an obstacle in the way of humans that he had to pass through.

If you remember, I think I mentioned it last week, but it was, I believe, Nathanael. And Jesus said to him, you know, you find it great that I told you where I saw you. I saw you basically under tree of some sort. But it says, I will tell you that you will see greater things than this. You will see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

And I guess I hadn't really thought about that a whole lot, but sometimes I thought that Jesus was a landing pad, right? That he was this thing with a big H in the middle where helicopters land, angels descend and ascend. But that is the exact language that's used in, in Genesis describing Jacob. Jacob went to sleep, right? And he uses a rock as a stone.

ShepherdsStream.org

And he woke up with a vision, and he saw a ladder extending from earth to heaven. And on it, angels were ascending and descending. Jesus is the ladder by which heaven interacts with man. Without that ladder, without the passing through the heavens, there is no source of spiritual blessings for you and I. But upon Jesus, angels ascend and descend, ministering to God's people.

I don't know if you've ever been in a spot where you needed a ladder before. Simple jobs become impossible without ladders, right? In our business, we use ladders. And I asked Jeshurun the other day, hey, Jesh, you know, we're doing a garage and house and like, do we have any ladders? And, okay, I'm coming from the house, I can bring ladders.

She said, yes, we have three ladders. Well, he really didn't have three ladders. What he had was two by fours nailed to each other like a little kid would do when they build a tree fort. And I'm just like, you know, Josh, this isn't the kind of professionalism we want to show in our job, you know, bent over nails here and there and these crooked two by fours going up this ladder. That's not what I meant when I said, do we have ladders?

We need ladders. And Jesus Christ is that ladder by which God reaches down to heaven. Sometimes we are like the disciples, right? And Jesus went up on the mountain. Then he ascended into their midst and there they were gazing up into heaven.

And the angels were kind of perplexed. What are you doing here? Looking up into heaven. This same Jesus who you saw ascend will descend in like manner. And it seems like they were just looking, you know, if only I had a ladder.

If only I had a ladder. And the angel said, look, the ladder's already been given. That ladder is Jesus Christ. He is the One and he will return. There's no use looking around, trying to find a ladder.

He's already the one who's crossed into heaven. His own body, his own sacrifices becoming that which God's spiritual blessings pass on to humans. He is the ladder. No

reason to go around looking. He is the one that can support the weight that we need.

And as a result we were told to hold fast to our confession. The goal is to hold on. In Christian life, it is more about holding on than the style of worship or how you do things. Sometimes it is just holding on. Remember Jacob wrestling with the angel?

All he had to do was hold on. It wasn't about how we wrestle, it was just holding on. And we're called to hold fast, to hold on until the day of Jesus Christ's return. Okay, so now we're going to be going into verse 15 and 16 and we're going to learn some things about this high priest, learn about the high trees. So 15 and 16 it says, for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses.

But he was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. It is a wonderful thing that Jesus Christ passed through the heavens, broke through that door into heaven. It is an amazing thing. But without compassion for sinners, it is not something that is useful for us.

While it doesn't diminish the heroic act of what he did without biblical compassion, it does not do us any good. Good we can have an individual who accomplishes something great, has options available to them, but unless they're willing to extend that to people, it does the people no good. So here we see that in order for the high priest to offer something, he has to have compassion. There are two things that we're going to look at here that are necessary for an individual to have compassion. Without these two attributes, it is impossible for a high priest to show compassion.

This great high priest which we're going to talk about is different from high priests of the world. The priesthood of Jesus Christ attains to a significance, to a level, to an ability that no high priest that is of the world has ever attained. To Jesus I'm going to go back to in Matthew, in Matthew 20:20, now I'm.

He begins to rail against the Pharisees and talk about them. It says, these sit in Moses seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to do, that do, but do not do. Do not be like them. For they bind heavy loads and place them on men's back.

The things they do are meant for themselves. They bind heavy loads hard to bear and will not lift one finger to lift them. They travel land and sea to make one proselyte. And when he is one, they make him twice the son of Hell as he was before. These individuals of whom are high priests in the world do not possess the compassion that Jesus Christ does as high priest.

He begins to tell them, oh brood of vipers, you are individuals. How can you escape the condemnation of hell? This is who you are in your heart. But Jesus Christ is not like them. He has compassion.

There is things that they have in their hearts that, that prevent them from attaining to a level of a high priest that Jesus can obtain to back to Hebrews for a moment here.

So this high priest, Jesus Christ is able to sympathize. These high priests of the world cannot effectively sympathize with people because something prevents them from sympathizing. You and I are not always the most sympathetic people. Everyone hear me.

In my home we have people crying all the time, right? Someone cut themselves, someone stubbed their toe, someone got their feelings hurt and we're just like, yeah, deal with it. Where's the super glue, right? And not overly sympathetic about this. But here there's something that Jesus has that makes him sympathetic, that enables him to be sympathetic, that puts him in a position as high priest to offer something.

We're going to look at what those are. It says, for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness. Here we have. Unless the high priest that you follow can sympathize with your weaknesses, you cannot find the help you need. You may Be the greatest surgeon that exists.

But. But if you are unwilling to help someone, your great skill accomplishes nothing unless you have a heart to be willing to help people who come to you. Your amazing ability does not profit anyone in this way. Also, we see that Jesus is a great high priest. But as a great high priest, is he someone who is willing to help you?

Is he an individual who is willing to. Is he approachable? Can you take your needs and come to him? So many of us have had real needs in time past. And we found that when we had real needs, we approached people.

Those people were not always sympathetic of our needs. Some of us bear scars, hurts and damages by which we now have a hard time trusting people. Because when we had a need, there was no one there to share our need with us. We met rejection and repulse more than compassion. Well, I'd like to say as we look at Jesus, this high priest, we recognize as we read through the scripture that he is a compassionate individual, that Jesus had compassion.

If you remember, the disciples were not always as compassionate as Jesus. Let's just say they were not as compassionate as Jesus. Remember when the children came to Jesus, right? And the disciples were like us, you know, hey, Stace, can we get rid of the kids for just a while? Let's just send them to a babysitter and let them cry to someone else for a while.

You know, send the kids away. We got adults stuff to talk about here, right? The disciples were like, they had the attitude of a Pharisee, send the kids away. But Jesus had compassion on the children. He wanted to bring the children.

He was surrounded by multitudes of needy people, demon possessed, sick, hurt, blind, lame. And these people continually crowded about Jesus. The disciples were like, let's get rid of these people. Let's go somewhere else. But Jesus had compassion on the people.

I don't know if you've ever had your door knocked on more than a few times in one day. And by the time this is over, you're like, man. Put like a we're not open sign there. Go see somebody else, call someone else's phone number for a while.

We don't have compassion. But Jesus had compassion on these multitudes. And one by one, he interacted with them, healed them, expressed a nature to them that allowed them to grow. Jesus, when he was teaching, came across multitudes two times who, in their desire to hear him preach, were short of food. And the disciples said to them,

look, send them away that they might find food.

We don't want to use the resources that we have to provide for people. Send them away, tell them to go to the towns. And Jesus said, no, I have compassion on them. They're like sheep that don't have a shepherd. What do we have?

Let's help these people. And so they had a few loaves and a couple fish the different times. And he used. He had compassion on them. He didn't want to see them faint on the way.

He had compassion on them and fed them and taught them he is a shepherd that cares about the needs of his sheep. I think if you and I are honest, we are more like the disciples than Jesus Christ. Now, I'm not here to beat up on you or to beat up on myself. The reason we are not like Jesus Christ is because we do not have the same nature as Jesus Christ and therefore are not qualified to have the ministry that he does. So let's look at that for a minute.

What does he have that no other high priest has? It says, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Here we see Jesus has a unique ability to sympathize with people because he was tempted as we are. We see that Jesus possessed a nature that felt the sting and pull of sin in the same way that you and I would have. We were looking a little bit before in Sunday school about the temptation of Jesus, and he fasted 40 days.

And it said he was hungry and he was tempted. Satan came to him in a way that was not just, hey, you want a piece of bread? This was a piece of bread that appealed to his physical nature, probably stronger than anything you have ever experienced. He wanted that bread. Afterwards, Satan took him to the place on the top of the temple and showed him something and encouraged him to tempt Jesus.

And Jesus says, tempt God. He said, you shall not tempt the Lord your God. And then Satan tempted him again with a if you fall down and worship me, I will give you everything. These three temptations he successfully resisted. These are very, very similar to that temptation that Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden of Eden and

failed in that.

They failed in this. But Jesus endured temptation. He was tempted in every way that you and I are and yet was without sin. We see that included his basic needs, the thoughts for his future, his emotional being, and ultimately a spiritual desire to control his surroundings. The things that you and I and our neighbors are failing with all the time.

He was tempted. He felt the sting of sin, the allurements of evil thoughts, the temptation to curse God and die. He felt the passion of lust for food and other physical desires in his body. He knew how strongly it makes a pull on the weakness of a human heart.

He fully comprehends the struggle in an individual's mind against the deceitful wiles of the devil. He understands what you're going through. He fully comprehends what you are being encouraged to participate in. That which maybe at times has dominated you. He understands he possesses that ability to resist sin after being tempted by it so many times.

Like the high priest of this world, people come to us and we despise them. We see their struggles and we don't relate to them. We think that we're better than them and therefore we don't have anything to offer them. But Jesus fully understands what you're going through. He understands your heart.

He understands the direction you are pulled in. He knows your frame. He knows that we're made out of dust because he has walked the same path we are walking that makes him qualified to be a high priest. He doesn't say that he's better than you. He doesn't attain a position.

He doesn't wear clothes that makes him inaccessible. No, he opens his door because he knows what you're going through because he's walked the same path that you are currently walking. But just because he walked the path does not mean that's the only thing that makes him fit for a high priest. The other thing that makes him fit for a high priest is that he is without sin. In every circumstance.

Where you have fallen, where you've been confused and overwhelmed, where the lusts of your heart have burned in rage that caused you to act in, in a way that is unbiblical, in every difficulty that you have placed yourself or has been put upon you. Jesus has already been there and understands the way out. He has accomplished righteousness in his life in the midst of the difficulty. He is uniquely qualified to show compassion because he's already experienced what you have and already overcome it. That he knows that in every circumstances there is victory that leads to life, that there is a blessing that comes from walking in obedience.

This makes him uniquely qualified. It says when he was in all points tempted as we are, and yet without sin, we look at this and we say, well, how can this be? In James, it says that God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. The reason Jesus Christ was able to be tempted was because he took on a flesh that is the same as ours, willingly took on incorruption that he might be made like his brethren in all things. He has become like you and I, he was tempted, as we are, yet without sin.

How many times when you've been lost, did you just wish for someone to show you the way out? Who's been on that path before and knows which way to go? How many times when you were working on something that was too mechanically difficult for you, you thought, you know, if there was only someone who has encountered this problem. Before I could figure this out, I was thinking about the age of the dinosaurs. You remember those books that says something for dummies?

What were those called? This is a manual for dummies, but a reference for the rest of us. They're probably completely broke right now. They're probably under now. No one goes to manual something for dummies anymore, do they?

We're almost to that point again. We're back in the age of dinosaurs when people looked on YouTube. Now no one looks on YouTube. Where do they go? Right to AI, right?

And AI looks there for us, right? But if we only had someone to show us the way. And so these books for Dummies or YouTube or something like that showed an individual

who was lost. Here we see that this high priest has done something for us. He experienced our trials, our difficulty, the sins that we encounter.

He overcame them perfectly. You say, that's wonderful, but if he does not make that available to you and I, it still does us no good. So we have to look. How is that knowledge made available to a person? How can an individual who is strong, struggling with sin take the availability of this great high priest in the world?

Also it's similar is that when you need a high priest that you go to him, right? And they offer sacrifices and prayers and incense. They put on their robes and such and swing balls with incense and all this thing to try to accomplish favor in God, to. To give you some sort of measure of spiritual benefit. What does it mean to come to Jesus Christ as high priest?

Is there a way that an individual who has passed through the heavens, who has accomplished a level of compassion for you, is there a way by which we must approach him? That's a good question. It would be wonderful if there were the high priest who passed through the heaven that was full of compassion. But if you didn't know how to get to him, it would be do you no value? I think the truth is, oftentimes we don't go to him as high priest.

Isn't that astonishing? Here, an individual who's accomplished something tremendously valuable on our behalf, who has identified with us, who will in no wise cast us out we find ourselves strangers to him because we don't knock on the right door. Ouch. That's kind of harsh. My cousin by marriage was talking to me yesterday.

And he's extraordinarily smart, computer engineer. And he's made a lot of money with like Roblox and such as their chief something. But he retired. I don't know if he retired, but he hasn't been working because he didn't need to. But he's been investing in people in India.

So they come to this building and people with good ideas in India come there with an idea. And then people from all over the world will Invest, you know, \$100,000 or a million dollars in this individual, this kind of clearing house for good ideas in India. And

he said, yeah, you know, you know, maybe 1 out of 10 is a good idea. So you might lose, you know, \$900,000. But if you hit that \$100,000, right, it may make you hundreds of millions of dollars.

And so he was talking about this. So these individuals come looking for something. And so in a similar way, if you don't know where to find the resources, then your good idea is nothing. If you don't know where to find Jesus Christ, then all the benefit that comes from him is lost. There is a place that he has found.

In verse 16, we're going to pick us up, it says, let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. There is a way in which Jesus Christ's throne is approached. In every throne, there are some things that are necessary to approach the throne. I remember reading a biography on Adaram Judson. And of course, he was in Burma.

And the king of Burma ruled in a certain way. It was with tremendous amount of fear. And his servants would crawl on their bellies up to the throne. And they knew if they didn't, they were going to be killed doing all sorts of disgusting, demeaning things before the throne of the ruler in the hope that they would gain something and not be killed. Other people in other countries are not quite so demeaning.

But, you know, you have to display a certain kind of attitude in order to obtain something. There's a certain kind of dress code that is necessary to approach the king or queen of England. You just don't go in there as you are right. There's something, there's a kind of way that you're supposed to go there in Jesus Christ, in that throne which he sits on. It is also necessary to approach the throne in a certain way.

He is not looking for people who come licking the ground all the way up to his throne. He's not looking for people who come beating themselves approaching the throne who tell how bad they are. No, that way, that path, that kind of close that we see here is boldly, boldly, boldly to the throne. If you remember, Esther, in that book of the Bible where God's name is not mentioned, that there was king Ahasuerus, and he had a rule that while he was set in counsel with his cabinet that no one could approach his

throne, that the penalty was always death unless he extended his scepter to that individual. And Esther, a young woman, was called and indicated by his uncle.

You need to go approach him. Look, the lives of your people are at stake. And Esther said, look, he is in cabinet meeting. No one can approach him.

The result is anger and death. And she said, no. But she set herself to fasting and prayer and called out other people to fast and prayer with us. And she decided, you know, if I die, I die, but I go. It was that boldness that extends the scepter.

Any other way is not fit for entering God's throne room. The only way which we can enter is with boldness. Individuals may want to enter other ways, but that way is not fit. They are cast out. Some people come trying to lick the dirt off the ground approaching the throne of Jesus Christ.

Some people come beating themselves with many lashes before the throne. Some people come beating other people with many lashes before the throne. Some people come before the throne and they're trying to tell him just what's going on. Well, I'm trying to tell you here is they may do that in any which way they want, but that does not mean that the response from the throne is what they expect. He says, you got to come boldly before the throne.

That's the only way. It is not a knocking on the door that irritates him. You and I, when we get a knock in the middle of the night, you know, I need three loaves of bread. We're like, you know, go home, I'm in bed. My kids are in bed.

Go look somewhere else. But that's the very kind of knocking that Jesus likes to hear. He said, I tell you, he will open the door to him and give him as much bread as he needs. Jesus loves a bold knocker. We see that all throughout every scripture.

We see that individuals who were bold always got from Jesus what they called out for. Remember those blind men? And they cried Out. Jesus, son of layman, have mercy on me. And the crowd said, shut up.

Be quick. Quiet. He's busy. He's walking somewhere. He has to get anywhere.

They cried out even louder, o Lord, son of David, have mercy on me. They would not be quiet. They had a boldness about them. Jesus said, bring them to me. You remember that woman?

And she was not of the nation of Israel. And the Lord spoke to her and said, it's not fit to give the children's bread to the dogs. But she had a boldness. She said, yes, Lord, but even the little dogs eat what falls from the table. And Jesus said, oh, woman, great is your faith.

Remember when Jesus was busy teaching in the house and they couldn't get in? And the lame man said, let's dig a hole through the roof. That's not a nice thing to do in any other place but the house of the Lord. In your house, how would you respond? You know, you lock the door, put on it we're not open sign and like, hey, we're busy.

Go somewhere else, you know, and they start chopping through the roof. We'd be like, call the police. But Jesus says, yeah, come on, that's what I want. Boldness. That's how you get in.

That's how you access any other way. You're kicked out. You got clothes on that look different than this. And Jesus responds like the person at the wedding feast. Who is that?

Look at this here. Look at their clothes. That's not the clothes that's fit for my house. Throw them out. Bound hand and foot into a place where there is weeping and darkness.

Some of us have been looking for the compassion of Jesus, but taking the wrong path to get there.

Some of us have been beating ourselves. Some of us have described ourselves as not worthy. Some of us have blamed it all on someone else. And we find ourselves missing his compassion when it's so available to us.

It says, let us come boldly to the throne of grace. This throne of grace is the place where the compassion of Jesus exercises itself in the life of people who don't deserve it. There is a throne of grace, but we have to understand that this throne is, it appears, has two sides. Two sides. Now, I know that some people might disagree with me, and I don't know much about theology and this kind of thing.

And they say, well, there's the great right throne of judgment, and then there's this other throne. And, you know, I don't know about that very much, but I do know that in the parable of the sheep and the goats. It says that he sets one on one side and one on the other. In Revelations, we see a picture that those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are welcomed into the kingdom, but those otherwise are judged according to their deeds. You see how we approach the throne, what throne we approach determines the outcome of what we receive from the throne.

I hate to say it, but there was a lady that I've had interaction with for a long time and. And not always good interaction. And the last time we really had anything to do with her, I was just like to my son, you know, get in the pickup, we're leaving. And she. Now, this kind of sounds like a little bit of a dig on her, and I hope.

I hope not. I hope not too much. But she was pulled over and possibly for drinking under the influence, right? But she was arguing with the officer. And the state patrol asked the jail, you know, can you just take her for a night?

She won't be quiet. She would have been let go. But she irritated the state patrol to such a degree that they asked the jailer to hold her for the night in jail. You see, how we approach officers of the law actually has.

Whoa, whoa. No looking for names, Josh.

It wasn't Jew. Right?

But somehow how we interact with the law determines the outcome we receive from the law. And here, in a similar way, that throne, how we approach it, what we're expecting from it, has different outcomes. To one, they're welcomed into the kingdom,

and they receive something of lasting value. The others are rejected and told to depart. They both came, in my mind, to the same place, but received from that place, vastly different outcomes.

This throne is the throne of grace to some, but it's a throne of judgment to the others. And it's based on how you approach the throne. Some people enter in front of that judge speaking one way. Some people enter in front of this great judge speaking another way. How they speak determines how they're treated.

Some of us go there, and we're full of excuses. We're full of judgmental attitudes and blame other people. Our righteousness is based in the law, and they receive justice. Their case is brought before the king. They said, you know, I demand a hearing here.

I am a good person. And so the great God of all ages, who knows everything, whose sword strips us down to the intents of our heart, judges them according to their actions. They wanted to be judged according to their deeds, and they were judged according to their deeds. And by their deeds, not one was found innocent. They were all guilty.

They were all naked and exposed before the throne. But those who approached the throne of grace, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner who calls out, you know I am not worthy to untie even the sandal of my Lord. I don't have any righteousness that clings to me. I have nothing by my own. But I am coming to this throne out of need of what you have.

That individual who goes to the throne of grace, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. That individual who approaches the throne with that manner of attitude receives something from the throne. That person who goes to the throne with a I am righteous in my own works always receives the same judgment. But those who come to the throne of grace always receive something. This is what it says.

It says, let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. The Lord has opened the door to his throne. You and I go there to find mercy. Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. But the surprising

thing we find is there we find grace also.

That he says, yeah, it was right of you to come. Now take more than you deserve. He begins not only to extend mercy, he doesn't just reach out the scepter to you. Do you know what he says? What do you want?

Even up to half of my kingdom is yours. See, we go to find mercy, but we end up being extended grace. That his desire is that we come and that once we have come, it's his desire to fill.

We are called to come boldly to this place. My only encouragement is that when you come, don't go standing on your own merits. Don't come clothed with the clothes that you think are right. Consider well that he is a great king, that he is high above all other kings and there is a protocol for approaching his throne and trusting in your own goodness. Please remember this, no matter which way you do it, beating yourself, blaming other people, escaping, pushing stuff around is not accepted.

You say, but it's been real bad. I say, it has been real bad. You say, they've been real mean, real mean. I say they have been real mean. But it doesn't matter how mean they've been or how bad it's been or all the circumstances that you may have encountered, it is not accepted.

Only mercy is displayed at the throne of grace and to come, Lord, I don't deserve it. Have mercy on me. And I absolutely believe that the heart that approaches this throne of grace finds more, way more than they ever thought they could. And so Please come boldly to that throne of grace. You will find a compassionate High priest who has passed through the heaven whose very desire is to fill your life.

Amen. Let's pray. Oh Father, we do come to you, Lord, so full of our own goodness, Lord, so stuffed with our own accomplishments, so absolutely yellow with despising other people, Lord, we just ask your forgiveness, Lord. And with a humble heart we come to you. Coming for that grace, Lord, the need of mercy.

Lord, thank you for your throne. Thank you for compassion for us. Thank you for your willingness to bear our cause, Lord. Help us to come to you in Jesus name. Amen.

ShepherdsStream.org