



Dignity Restored

January 30, 2022

Hebrews 2:5-9

Clint Pressley

⁵For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? ⁷You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, ⁸putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

(Pastor prays)

All we have is right now. But right now doesn't seem all that great. Inflation is high, the stock market is low and everybody is tired. Those whom we love are suffering. Work is confusing, frustrating or downright depressing. Politics are terrible. Christians are fighting and war is looming in Ukraine. All the while, Covid continues to do its random killing, and, if not killing, long-term suffering. Schools can't function well; hospitals are full, and restaurants can't find help. Weird racial tensions keep heating up even among people of otherwise good will. And the church can't seem to find its footing.

But into this burning morass, the word of God speaks a cool drink of Living Water to our parched souls. I want you to drink today. I want you to be

refreshed and strengthened and made hopeful, because this is a hopeful passage. Chapter 2 started in verses 1-4 as a warning, the first of five in the book of Hebrews, as the pastor warns his congregation about the dangers and temptations of drifting from “so great a salvation.” And now with the warning given, he changes his tone to one of comfort and encouragement. Comfort to all the Christians who wonder, “Why am I doing this? Why do I even try? What’s the use? Nobody cares.” And to that he answers: God sees, God cares and God loves.

So for all of you who are tired and weary and struggling and frustrated and numb, I want you to drink today of the refreshing Living Water that is Christ, because all we have is now and all we need is Christ.

We Are Not As We Should Be

In verse 5 the preacher makes the transition from arguing that Christ is better than the angels, and now he puts the focus on *us* in verse 6. He starts quoting the Bible. And for three verses he will quote Psalm 8:4-6. See how he introduces the Psalm in verse 6. ⁶ *It has been testified somewhere.*

And then he uses the passage to give us a rock-solid doctrine of man. There are a few things to look at.

Great grace. “*What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?*” Now to get to the punch of that question, you have to go back to Psalm 8 and read it in its context. Psalm 8:3-4. *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?* When God has created so much, billions of people on the earth, millions of stars in the sky, thousands of miles of ocean, and yet He is mindful. He remembers. Psalm 103:14 says, *For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.* He is mindful of our weaknesses, tendencies, hurts, failures, frailties and fears. To know that the ever-present, almighty God is here and sees and knows is a great, saving grace.

Great care. “*What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?*” Care. That is that He loves you, His creation. Think of the people who are close to you and how you love them and what you would do for them. Now multiply that 10,000 by 10,000 times and you still come up short of understanding how God loves you in Christ.

The best place to see the full expression of God’s love is at the cross. When you hear the Gospel, don’t put it on a shelf. It was useful when it saved you, but that isn’t all it does. It ministers to our hearts. We think about the goodness and sovereignty of God as the creator who created all things and created you in His image. But the sin in our lives has disfigured that image and separated us from God. Yet God still pursues us and loves us, so much so that Jesus, all God and all man, lived perfectly because we can’t. He went to the cross, the instrument of judgment, and took our sins on Himself. He died on the cross, God raised Him from the dead and He ascended into Heaven. And now the Gospel offer is to you, if you believe, you receive the righteousness of Christ. The Bible says that if you turn from sin and believe that, you are saved. That’s great grace and great care, but that’s not all it is.

Look at the great privilege. ⁷ *You made him for a little while lower than the angels;* Mankind. The creation of God in the great cosmic hierarchy, man was put on earth to glorify God and to be served and ministered to by the angels. But also to be reminded that it is for a little while. As a part of His divine plan that is going somewhere and has a meaning, that here on earth in whatever station you find yourself, God is using it to refine and shape and struggle. The struggle is here so that you don’t love the world too much. COVID is here so that you won’t love this world too much. Surely that’s what Paul meant when he said in 2 Corinthians 4:17, *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,* The great privilege it is to be made lower than the angels just for a little while to get our minds and hearts and souls set on richer things.

Look at the great dignity of mankind in verses 7-8. ⁷ *You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor,*

⁸*putting everything in subjection under his feet.*” Here is the reason we view everyone with respect. You were made in the image of God, every person bearing that image. This informs our view on the sanctity of life, from conception to death. This is why we hate abortion. It has nothing to do with politics. This is why we hate suicide or euthanasia, homelessness and poverty. This is why we have a food pantry and clothes closet and mission trips to Lumberton with Hearts & Hammers. This is why we treat one another with respect and hate abuse and seek to be kind. This is why we believe that human life and animal life is different. A pet is a gift from God (or the Devil, depending on the pet). A pet is a gift from God, but a person is in the *image* of God. That is why we believe in work. ⁸*putting everything in subjection under his feet.*” Now in putting everything in subjection to Him, He left nothing outside of man’s control.

Here is the creation doctrine of dominion found in Genesis 1:26. ²⁶ *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”* You read Genesis or the Psalms or here in Hebrews and you realize that we are not what we should be. We’ve forgotten God’s grace, we’ve ignored God’s love, we’ve abandoned our special privilege, we’ve devalued our dignity and the dignity of others and forsaken our responsibilities as caretakers and life-watchers.

And the preacher says as much at the end of verse 8: At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to Him. We sure don’t. What we see is felt chaos on the border of lunacy. What we see from gender confusion to mathematics to the treatment of the human body to respecting rights to the corruption in government or church or homes. Cars break down. People act out and children rebel. Bosses lie and spouses cheat, and when you read Romans 1 you realize that God gave them over. Since the fall of the first humans, Adam and Eve, we have not been what we are intended to be.

It’s a doctrine called “total depravity.” That doesn’t mean we are totally bad as sinners; it means that there is not one part of you that is not somehow

stained with sin. Jerry Bridges said even our tears of repentance need to be washed in the Lamb. It's the point that Paul makes in Romans 8:19-20. ¹⁹ *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.* ²⁰ *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope.* In hope. We do not see the good that should be. We are not as we should be. Things are not as they should be.

Christ makes all things new

Verse 9 says, ⁹ *But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

It feels like everything is bad all the time. People hurt. You hurt. I hurt. And then our eyes turn to Christ and to the Gospel. Verse 9 is the Gospel. Follow it closely. This is What John Matthews called “the great recovery.” This is where Jesus is first mentioned.

Verse 9 says, “who for a little while was made lower than the angels.” It's the same language as verse 7. Jesus is what we are *supposed* to be. He is the *true* man, the *last* Adam and the *only* son. He gets back the glory and dominion that the first Adam lost because of sin. Are you in Adam or are you in Christ? He is the perfect man. Jesus. What Adam lost Christ has gained. And to comfort our souls and minister to our hearts in the middle of sin and confusion and pain and COVID and frustration, the preacher takes us to the cross. Jesus was crowned with glory in honor because of the suffering of death so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

Look, you are not as you should be. Things are not as they should be. But Christ is all we need. All we have is now and all we need is Christ.

Are you in Christ or are you in Adam? Are you overwhelmed? Do you understand grace? Let's pray.

(Pastor prays)