

## Intercession

Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:21-28

Jesus is our Great High Priest. Listen again to chapter 4 –

“Since then we have **a great high priest** who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable **to sympathize with our weaknesses**, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4:14-15

Our word today is “**intercession**.” Chapter 7 of Hebrews tells us that Jesus “always lives to make intercession for us.” This is the work of the High Priest – to intercede on behalf of the people – to stand before a sinful people and a holy God and plead their case. This is what Jesus does for us – constantly – in heaven. He is our MEDIATOR, our intercessor, our advocate. **He represents us** – sinners though we are – before the holy, glorious God of heaven – and speaks on our behalf. He prays for us. He is our great high priest.

Think of what it means to have **a compassionate, capable advocate** – someone who knows your situation and is able to speak on your behalf.

- As a **teacher**, you are accused of inappropriate contact with a student. Think of what it means to have a fellow teacher speak on your behalf – one who knows you, knows the situation and can speak to the school board as your advocate.
- As a **police officer**, you are accused of using excessive force in an arrest. Think of what it means to have a fellow police officer speak on your behalf – one who knows you, knows the situation and can speak to the investigators on your behalf.
- As an **employee**, you are accused of misusing company resources. Think of what it means to have a fellow office worker speak on your behalf – one who knows you, knows the situation and can speak to the upper management on your behalf.
- It can make all the difference in the world to have an advocate – a mediator – who can intercede on your behalf.

Sometimes, beyond a friend or co-worker as an advocate, **we need a professional** – which is why lawyers are a thing. Many of you know that we’ve been trying to sell our house in Chicago for all 28 months we have lived in Florida. Yes, that is 2 years and 4 months now. The house has been off and on approved as a short sale. This past May, when that short sale contract was finally rejected by the bank the house was moving toward foreclosure. Twice we got a visit from a process server with a thick packet of papers I had to sign – making it unavoidably clear that foreclosure was underway. The auction date was set for May 16.

We got different advice but felt it was best to **hire an attorney**. (An attorney at Oakwood helped us make this decision and to choose the right guy to represent us.) We hired a guy named Josh who specializes in short sales. He dove into our situation – collecting all the paperwork to get to know what was going on. Then he submitted appeals on our behalf which quickly stopped the foreclosure auction and restarted the short sale process. Over the summer he advocated for us **to get a new appraisal** that took into account the fact that the house had been on the market for two years with very few offers. A month ago we got an offer within a few percentage points of the new appraised value – and we are hopeful to close out the short sale very soon.

What made the difference? A **compassionate and capable ADVOCATE**. Josh entered our situation to get to know who we were and what kind of trouble we were in. **And he had the resources, experience and ability to help us**. He was both compassionate and capable. In an advocate you need both. If you have someone who cares for you but can't help you, they aren't a great advocate. If you have someone who could help you but doesn't care – you're in trouble. But if you can find someone who is both compassionate and capable – then you have the representative you need.

And that, of course, is **exactly what we have in Jesus**. He is both compassionate and capable – and supremely so. Jesus is our Great High Priest. He is the ultimate advocate – the mediator who can intercede on our behalf before our holy God. Today we will look at both sides of Jesus – his compassion and capability. First the joyful hope that Jesus is willing to help us and then the glorious good news that Jesus is able to help us – and He has helped us – wonderfully so. Look at Hebrews 4:15.

### **The Ideal Advocate is:**

#### **1. Compassionate – willing to help us**

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable **to sympathize with our weaknesses**, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4:14-15

How was Jesus able to sympathize with our weaknesses? What did the eternal Son of God, the glorious Creator of all things, do in order to truly and fully relate to us? The answer, of course, is **Christmas**. He is the God who came. **Jesus is Immanuel – the God who came to us**.

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- **Jesus is Immanuel – the God who came to us**

This is what Isaiah foretold – that the virgin would give birth to a child the people would name “Immanuel, God with us.” That prophecy was made 700 years before Jesus was born. **Imagine**

**what it felt like for young Mary** to hear that word from the angel – “I know you’re not together with Joseph yet. But still you’re going to have a baby. It’s going to be confusing and terribly scandalous. But this is what the prophet foretold and the fulfillment has come. Whaddya think?”

**There is no way Mary understood** what was happening and all it would mean – but she knew the Bible and she trusted in the Lord. So she answered in faith, “May it be to me as you have said.” What she perceived was that **God was moving in love to help His people** – to help her. She had the opportunity to be a part of that great work of salvation.

And so, for nine months, Mary had the mind-blowing privilege to carry in her womb the Creator of the womb. This teenage girl was the warm, loving environment for the One who created the warm, loving environment called Planet Earth. The One who spoke and the universe leapt into being – the One who holds the cosmos in the palm of His hand – for nine months the Lord of heaven was a silent, helpless, tiny growing baby.

We celebrate Christmas and the humility of Jesus’ birth. But **the real miracle was the conception and the humility of Jesus’ gestation**. On His actual birthday the angels exploded into the night sky and there were shepherds and later magi from the east. For nine months there was nothing but uterine wall and an umbilical cord. Silence and helplessness. The Son of God became the son of Mary in the miracle of the incarnation.

That is how Jesus had to develop his perfect compassion for us: **He had to come to us**. And he came to us by becoming one of us. Listen to John 1 -

### **The Ideal Advocate is:**

#### **1. Compassionate – willing to help us**

**“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** John 1:14

- **Jesus is the Son of Man** – the God who became one of us

And so “God WITH US” became **“God is ONE OF US.”** The eternal Lord of glory became human flesh in everything that means except sin. The One who overflows with every perfection – who defines what is holy, righteous, loving and good – poured all of that glory into the weakness and frailty of a fully human body. The incarnation is the Biblical teaching that the fully divine Son of God became FULLY HUMAN. **Jesus did not just LOOK HUMAN. He was human** in every sense of the word and **still is human** though now in a glorified state. And, of course, he had to be human so that he could die. The divine Son of God could not die any more than the flaming ball of gas we call the sun could be extinguished with a squirt gun.

But this is the glory we see in Jesus –

- that He took His **immortality** as the Son of God and wove it together with His mortality as the Son of Man.
- He took His limitless **power** as the Son of God and wove it together with His very limited power as the Son of Man.
- He took His infinite **knowledge** as the Son of God and wove it together with His limited knowledge as the Son of Man.

Think of **what baby Jesus had to learn** – just like every other human baby ever. He had to learn how to roll over; how to sit up; how to crawl; how to walk; how to babble and much later, how to talk. Jesus was not like Alec Baldwin the Boss Baby who was born wearing a suit and giving high level business directives. The odds are that Jesus was totally average. He probably took 4-5 months before he started crawling and didn't walk until he was around 1. He probably didn't say real words until he was 18 months or two years old or more.

The wonder of the incarnation for Mary and Joseph must have been those early years as **THEY taught their Creator how to speak**. They sang him songs and taught him the sounds animals make. Jesus had to learn his colors and shapes. Don't you wonder what his first word was? There's an awesome bias in the English language for the D sound to come before the M sound – so most babies start saying Da-Da-Da before they can say Ma-Ma-Ma, which I always took for a clearly stated preference. Kristin would be like, "He was not saying 'Dad' there, that was gibberish." But I know what I know.

So I wonder if Jesus' first word might have been "Abba" – Aramaic for Daddy or Papa. Maybe it came out "Ba-Ba." If I was Joseph I would've worked hard on the animal sounds and focused especially on the little wooden sheep – "baaa-baaa." "Who do you love best? That's right, Abba!"

The point is that Jesus became fully human because of the fullness of His love for us.

### **The Ideal Advocate is:**

#### **1. Compassionate – willing to help us**

**"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:14-15**

- **Jesus is the Son of Man** – the God who became one of us

He not only came TO US, Jesus became ONE OF US. This is what we need in an advocate – one who not only knows about our situation but has immersed himself in it. Jesus so immersed himself in the human situation that he was tempted IN EVERY RESPECT as we are.

Think of what that means. **Jesus was tempted IN EVERY WAY**. There is no temptation you or I experience that Jesus did not experience. Not one. In fact, we don't know the full strength of temptation because we give in. The only way to know the full strength of temptation is if you

DON'T give in. So Jesus actually knows the fullness of temptation MORE than any of us because He never gave in, not one time.

- If you really want **a cookie** and you see the plate on the counter but you resist for an hour, you might be pretty proud of yourself. The saliva was building in your mouth. You could smell the chocolate chip goodness, you could see as your boys ate the cookies how soft and warm they were. But you resisted. The desire was strong, but you held it off. For one hour.
- After an hour, you ate a cookie. 10 minutes later you ate two more. Then you decided you needed a scoop or two of ice cream because the cookies weren't really complete.
- I wish this were a fictitious episode.

The one who resists for one hour does not know what it takes to resist all night and through the next day and the next week in the interminable nonsense of a low-carb diet. **Jesus was tempted IN EVERY RESPECT as we are.** He felt every desire we do. Not just for cookies. He felt it more than we do BECAUSE he never once gave in.

- Jesus noticed **attractive women**, but he thought and acted toward them with nothing but love.
- Jesus wanted **financial security and physical comfort**. But he never compromised his mission to stay an extra night in a nice home. He was thankful for every place he was able to eat and to rest and never held on to any physical or financial resource for a minute longer than he needed it.
  - Imagine the disciples as they travelled around – you wonder how many nights they laid down in an open field and **Jesus had no cloak** because he had given it away.
  - I wonder who the disciple was who was in charge of finding Jesus ANOTHER new cloak. I bet they became very aware of this particular generosity of Jesus so they would try to catch him giving it away so they could track down a replacement for him while they were still in town.
- Jesus wanted **recognition and success** for his ministry. But he never compromised his message to attract bigger crowds. In fact, he often cranked up his message precisely to filter out the truly committed from just the curious.

***Jesus loved us so much that he completely entered our experience.*** He felt everything you feel. He struggled with all the same desires and temptations. And he felt them even more strongly than you and I do because he never once gave in. This is our Great High Priest. **He can sympathize.**

Whatever you are going through – whatever you are feeling – aren't you thankful that this is our advocate? Jesus is supreme in compassion. He was so willing to help us that He came to us and became one of us. ***This is the ultimate answer to the problem of evil and suffering.*** It's not that God has chosen at this time to FIX everything but that in Christ God EXPERIENCED EVERYTHING.

He truly KNOWS what you are going through because He has been through it and more. Jesus knows because He cares. He loves you and can relate to you more than any other person. That is why He came. So He would know. That's love – to enter in, to share the experience. That's what Jesus did. That's what Christmas is about. Jesus is supreme in compassion.

And Jesus is also supreme in capability. He alone is able to help us.

### **The Ideal Advocate is:**

#### **2. Capable – able to help us**

“It was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens.” Heb. 7:26

- **Jesus is the Sacrifice** – the God who gave up His life for you

**The priests of Israel** were supposed to be holy. Everything in the life and ministry of the high priest was designed to teach Israel what holiness was. He dressed in a special way. He followed very special rules. He had special jobs to do. He could go into parts of the temple no one else could enter. To do so he had to prepare and wash in certain ways and offer special sacrifices.

The priests of Israel had to offer **sacrifices for their own sins** and for the sins of the people – which was one of the reasons that their ministry could never stop – it was never finished; never enough. But because Jesus was perfectly holy – utterly unstained by sin – he was the perfect, unblemished Lamb of God who could serve as the once for all sacrifice for sins.

The Jews were always presenting **animals as sacrifices to temporarily atone for** – or cover – sin. But those sacrifices could only serve as **band-aids** for two reasons: the priests and the animals. The priests were not sinless and the animals were not perfect.

Yes, they could only offer healthy animals without visible defects. But still, no lamb – however cute and cuddly – could be the PERFECT sacrifice to atone for sins of PEOPLE. **The only perfect sacrifice for PEOPLE had to be a PERSON.** And the high priest who offered that sacrifice could not have any sin of his own. Listen to verse 27.

### **The Ideal Advocate is:**

#### **2. Capable – able to help us**

“He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this **once for all** when he offered up himself.” Heb. 7:27

- **Jesus is the Sacrifice** – the God who gave up His life for you

Here is a glorious gospel phrase: **“Once for all.”** Think of how many animals died in payment for the sins of Israel. Countless MILLIONS. Every day, every month, every year – thousands upon thousands of lambs, goats, rams and bulls – to say nothing of the birds. **It was the ultimate**

**band-aid solution.** The disease of sin ran deep in the hearts of the people, so they were constantly bleeding. And all they had was animal sacrifice to atone for THIS SIN – band-aid. And then THAT SIN – band-aid. One more sin – band-aid. Ugh, I sinned again – **band-aid**.

**If you were the school nurse** and the same kid kept coming to you ever 10 minutes with a new scratch, how many band-aids would you put on before you went to see if there was a more permanent solution? You go to his desk and find it is a wooden fiasco of shredded wood and exposed, bent, rusty nails. Yes, you can keep putting on band-aids for his scratches – but the kid doesn't really need more band-aids, **what he really needs is a new DESK!** Or, for a better gospel analogy, the nurse finds out this kid has a skin and blood disorder so the tiniest bump or scratch makes him bleed instantly. For now he needs tons of band-aids but what he **really needs is a cure for that INTERNAL DISEASE.**

That's what the Old Testament Law was designed to teach. It was a strict teacher. The key lesson was that you don't really need more band-aids to cover your sin – you need a NEW HEART. You don't need an external covering, **you need an INTERNAL TRANSFORMATION.**

This is why Jesus came to be born as a baby – so He could become the ONCE FOR ALL sacrifice for our sins. We call Him the Lamb of God not because he was a literal lamb but because he was the **PERFECT SACRIFICIAL SUBSTITUTE.** Lambs were cute and innocent, but only Jesus was PERFECT. Lambs were not guilty of sin, but they could not fulfill all righteousness. Only Jesus did that.

Jesus is the God who gave up His life for you. Jesus came not to provide another band-aid but to perform ***the heart-transplant surgery that every one of us needs.*** In order to do that, He had to be both the Sacrifice and the High Priest. He had to offer up HIMSELF.

And thanks be to God, that is precisely what He did. Now we turn to chapter 9.

### **The Ideal Advocate is:**

#### **2. Capable – able to help us**

“He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing **an eternal redemption.**” Heb. 9:12

- **Jesus is the Savior** – the God who transforms sinners into saints

The human high priest could only enter the most holy place of the temple one time each year. But even that act on the Day of Atonement could still only provide a temporary covering for sin – it was still a band-aid. The holy place Jesus entered as he hung on the cross was not in Jerusalem – it was in heaven itself. ***The temple in Jerusalem was just a shadow and a copy*** of the true holy place where the shekinah glory of God eternally dwells.

That is where the payment was made. That is where the blood of Jesus was applied. There was no animal he could sacrifice to get him into that holy sanctuary. **It was only a PERFECT sacrifice** – only a truly holy and righteous one whose blood would suffice. So the only sacrifice Jesus could offer was his own life – His fragile, mortal, HUMAN LIFE.

But as he was flogged and beaten – as he shed his blood and hung on the cross for you and for me, ***through that perfect ONCE FOR ALL sacrifice Jesus was able to enter*** the most holy sanctuary of God in heaven and- look at the words – thus secure ETERNAL REDEMPTION.

Eternal. Redemption. That was no band-aid. **That was the miracle cure.** That was the ONCE FOR ALL – full and final sacrifice. There was no need to repeat that sacrifice because it was SUFFICIENT. It was ENOUGH. At that moment, when that price was paid, the work was FINISHED – FOREVER. It was an ETERNAL redemption that Jesus secured for us – as both our sacrifice and our high priest. Listen to verse 28:

### **The Ideal Advocate is:**

#### **2. Capable – able to help us**

“So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” 9:28

- **Jesus is the Savior** – the God who transforms sinners into saints

Our great high priest – our Representative, Sacrifice, Savior and King – ***is coming back soon to complete our salvation.*** Yes, our REDEMPTION was secured on the cross. But our SALVATION – that broader term that encompasses the whole process of your life – that will not be totally finished until Jesus comes back. Then the last stains of remaining sin in your life will be finally purged away. Then this weak, frail human body will be upgraded into an immortal, eternal human body. Then we who are clothed in weakness will be transformed and GLORIFIED. Then, we who have been set free from the penalty and power of sin will finally be released from even the PRESENCE of sin.

**Jesus is the ideal advocate.** He is both supremely compassionate and supremely capable. He is both willing to help us and able to help us. He is both the once for all sacrifice for our sins and the great high priest who offered that sacrifice to secure our eternal redemption.

Two applications as we close. First:

### **Since Jesus is the Ideal Advocate:**

#### **1. Be Committed to Him**

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, **let us hold fast our confession.**” Hebrews 4:14



This is the main exhortation of the book of Hebrews. Once you realize that Jesus is the all glorious Son of God and the Great High Priest, the only sensible response is to ***commit everything you are to Him***. Jesus is the ultimate advocate – the ideal defense attorney. Have you retained Him? **Have you asked Jesus to represent you?** Have you fallen on your knees before Jesus, the King, and asked Him to become YOUR sacrifice, YOUR mediator, YOUR high priest?

And once you make that good confession of Jesus Christ as YOUR LORD, “**HOLD FAST**” to that confession. Be steadfast; immovable. Stand firm in the Lord. Jesus is your Advocate. He lives to intercede for you. So hold fast to Him. Don’t anything shake your commitment to Christ as Lord. That’s the first application – be committed to Christ. The second one follows:

### **Since Jesus is the Ideal Advocate:**

#### **2. Be Confident in Him**

“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a priest forever.” Heb. 6:19-20

***This is our firm foundation.*** This is the anchor of our souls – that Jesus is our mediator. He stands in the holy presence of God on YOUR behalf. Jesus – the holy one – the great high priest – has entered the most holy place in heaven where the shekinah glory of God dwells forever. That’s what it means “behind the curtain.” To go behind the great curtain in the temple meant certain death for anyone but the high priest. But Jesus went there. And because He went there the way has been opened through His blood so that we can enter with Him. He is our forerunner.

Where He has gone is where we will go. He is already there and his ministry now is to constantly intercede for us. Think of that. **Jesus is praying for you** – right now. And unlike us He never gets distracted or tired. Jesus knows exactly what to pray and His prayers always get answered. He is the ideal advocate. He represents us perfectly because He totally entered our situation. He knows exactly what you are going through because He has been through it and more. He loves you so much that He gave up His life to save yours.

This is our sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. Jesus is our great high priest. He represents you before God. Be confident in Him. Rest in Him. Rely on Him. You are safe in His arms.

Let’s pray.