

JUST LIKE US

Text: Hebrews 2:10-18

Belgic Confession Art 18

Readings: 1 John 4:1-16a; Psalm 22; Heb 1:1-4

Theme: Jesus has fully shared in our humanity to give us all the benefits of salvation.

Purpose: To explain why and how Jesus shared in our humanity and to explain the benefits to us.

In our relationships with other people we tend to feel close to those with whom we have something in common; maybe you share the same interests, or do a similar job, or you went to the same university, or you have children of similar ages. When we meet another person it always helps to have a point of contact, some link, something you share together. This helps you to understand this person and vice versa. Whatever the link, you are drawn together by what it is you have in common. You feel the other person understands you, and you her.

This passage teaches us that the Lord Jesus has much in common with us. He knows us and identifies with us because he too is human. He shares the same humanity. There is a link between us, a bond, a closeness, a fellowship, a union. Jesus became like us so he could save us, so he could rescue us from sin and from Satan.

Today we want to consider the humanity of our Lord Jesus and the salvation that comes to us from him identifying himself with us.

We will look at these two areas:

1. His full humanity with us
2. His full salvation for us

Before we examine his full humanity we first need to remind ourselves that he was **fully God**. This letter opens with the great truth that Jesus is God's Son, "whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." Today he is seated at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. (1:2f)

In the rest of chapter 1 the writer shows that Jesus was far superior to the angels. The Son of God is God himself, the second person of the trinity and the One whom the angels worship.

But Jesus also became a man so that he could save men. He had to do this in order to save us as his people.

1. HIS FULL HUMANITY WITH US

a. Verse 17 says, "For this reason he had to made like his brothers in every way..." The word "had" means he was obligated, it was a necessity; this had to be done for him to rescue us. A man had sinned so a man had to pay for sin. Jesus had to identify fully and wholly and completely with us. He became one of us so he could save us.

b. We read about this in verse 11 where the writer tells us that we are "of the same family". "The one who makes men holy", that is, Jesus, "and those who are made holy", that is, those whom Jesus saves, "are of the same family".

We use this phrase to identify our closeness with members of our own families; in the same way Jesus is family with us.

c. Then at the end of verse 11 we read; "So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers." Jesus has called us his brothers and sisters because he is also a man, human like us.

The writer supports this with three quotes from Old Testament passages that identify the Messiah with his people. These were prophecies about how Jesus would be like us and his being born into this

world fulfilled all these predictions.

d. This is taught again in verse 14: "Since the children have flesh and blood he too shared in their humanity."

He was the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, having a divine nature, but he also took on a human nature. The word "shared" means "to have a part in". He became flesh and blood like us. He was incarnate, which comes from two Latin words - *in* + *carnis*, which means, in flesh.

The word "too" in verse 14 can be translated as "likewise". It has the sense of being the same, equal, identical. Jesus took on a humanity that was the same as ours, equal in every respect, without any difference, except that Jesus had no sin.

e. Verse 16 adds to this by explaining that he did not come into the world to save angels, no, he came to save "Abraham's descendants."

He did not come into the world to save the *angels of God* because they don't need saving - they are part of God's kingdom, they belong to God, they do his will, they are gathered around his throne singing his praises.

Nor did he come into the world to save the *fallen angels* who rebelled with Satan. They are guilty and rebellious and lost and will eventually be thrown into the lake of burning sulphur (Rev 20:10). There is nothing in the Scriptures to suggest that God provides any salvation for them.

Rather, the Son of God became a man to save *us*, "Abraham's descendants", his people.

f. This is reinforced in verse 17 where it says that Jesus "had to be made like his brothers in every way". Jesus did not just copy us or simulate our humanity.

You've probably heard of an aircraft simulator. A pilot sits in the cockpit of the simulator and it looks and feels like an aeroplane but it's not; it simulates or copies an aeroplane and its actions.

Jesus is *not* like a simulator; he didn't just copy us. No, he became one of us, exactly the same, except for sin. He didn't *simulate* our nature but he *assimilated* our human nature, which means he became exactly like us, having the same substance as us. He was fully man.

This means that Jesus shared in all that we experience. No doubt he had colds and flus, he was sad and sorrowful, he knew fear and frustration, he felt lonely and isolated, he knew what it was like to be hungry and thirsty, and to be rejected and scorned. He experienced all this because he was human like us.

g. One of the repeated errors in the history of the church has been to deny the real humanity of Jesus, to make him less than human. This view is known as *docetism* from the Greek word 'dokeo', which means "to appear". It teaches that Jesus only *appeared* to be human.

Sometimes this view was held with the best of motives because people wanted to protect the full *divinity* of Jesus, they wanted to maintain that he was truly and fully God.

But in doing so they lost sight of the fact that he was also fully *human*. The writer of Hebrews emphasises his humanity because to deny it is a dangerous heresy. The apostle John made this truth a test of true faith when he wrote; "Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God" (1 John 4:2-3).

This is a central truth because if Jesus had not become fully man none of us would be saved.

2. HIS FULL SALVATION FOR US

a. He destroyed Satan and set us free (v 14b-15)

i. Jesus came to "destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil".

This does not mean that Satan has authority over death or that he decides who will die or when they will go. No, we know that *God* had that power; our times are in his hands.

What this means is that death originated with Satan. He helped introduce it into the world by tempting Eve.

He also holds the power of death in the sense that he tempts people to sin, and sin leads to death, and death means condemnation and punishment.

ii. Jesus came to "destroy him who holds the power of death."

The word "destroy" does not mean annihilate. When Jesus died on the cross he did not completely destroy Satan.

Rather, the word means to render powerless or ineffective. Satan is powerless to harm those who trust in God.

This is pictured in Revelation 20 where John saw an angel coming down out of heaven with a great chain and bound Satan so that he could deceive the nations any longer. This is what Jesus has done. In this present age Satan cannot prevent the spread of the good news about the salvation Jesus offers to all. Jesus has bound Satan and restricted his power.

iii. By sharing in our humanity Jesus "freed those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (verse 15).

Death is always associated with sadness. It is the last enemy. But for many, death also holds a great fear, even terror. And rightly so, because death has a sting in its tail; the sting of death is sin, and sin condemns the unbeliever to an eternal death, to the punishment of hell.

But the one who believes in Jesus is set free from this slavery to fear.

Matthew Henry, in his usual way with words, wrote; "He whose head is in heaven need not fear to put his feet in the grave."

Death will always be the last enemy; it will always hold pain and sadness and grief. But a Christian can face death with faith, not fear; with hope, not despair. When you die with faith in Christ you step from this life into eternal life, from sadness into everlasting joy, from crying and tears to singing and glory!

This is the first great result of Christ sharing our humanity, the first great benefit to us – Jesus destroyed Satan and set us free.

b. The second benefit is expressed in verse 17; he "become a **merciful and faithful high priest.**"

The task of the Old Testament High Priest was to represent the people to God. He was a go-between, a mediator. The best representative is one who can truly represent both parties, who can see an issue from both sides, who understand both points of view.

Jesus is such a mediator. He is our perfect representative because he was and is one of us.

As a High Priest he was and is *merciful*.

He isn't an unfeeling arbitrator - cold, analytical, distant, uninvolved.

He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and full of compassion. This is the mediator we have - full of love for his people.

And he is a *faithful* mediator. He fulfilled his task, he did what he was sent to do. He is reliable and dependable. He won't let you down. He will always be there for you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. You can trust him.

So by his humanity he freed us from the fear of death, he has acted, and still acts, as our mediator, and thirdly,

c. "**He made atonement for the sins of his people**" (v 17b). Jesus was not only the high priest, he was the sacrifice as well! He *offered* the sacrifice and he *was* the sacrifice.

The words "make atonement" can also be translated with the word "propitiation". It is a very rich word that refers to the turning away of God's wrath because of the death of another. We sinned and we bear the guilt of that sin. God is angry with us because of our sin and because he is just he must punish that sin. The only way out of that is for another to take our place, for us to have someone substitute for us.

Jesus has done that. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sin. By his death he paid for sin and satisfied the wrath and the justice of God so that we could be forgiven. He was punished so we could be pardoned.

Jesus has freed us from the fear of death, he is our mediator and has turned away God's wrath.

d. As part of this great salvation Jesus has gained for us he is also **able to help us when we are tempted** (v 18).

All through his life on earth Jesus was tempted to sin, tempted to give up on his task, tempted to be selfish. He was a man and so he felt the full weight of those temptations and suffered through them.

Because of that he can help you when you are tempted because he knows what you are going through. So ask for his help, go to him in prayer and plead with him; "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

e. God's great salvation through Jesus his Son is summed up in one phrase at the beginning of this passage, in verse 10, where we read that God is "**bringing many sons to glory.**"

This is a comprehensive statement of what God is doing. It describes the final climax of God's work of salvation. This is the goal, the great object of God's work in our lives.

The Apostle Paul describes it in Romans 8:30; "And those he predestined he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

This is why Jesus became one of us; he became like us so that we could become like him, he suffered and died so that we could be pardoned and live, he shared in our humanity so that we might share his glory!

Amen