

DISCOVERING THE UNDERCOVER JESUS, Part 2 (Hebrews 2:5-18)

In the 1950's and '60's, there was a delightful TV game show called *What's My Line?* Do you remember it? Unlike today's game shows, it didn't offer contestants great sums of money, new cars, or exotic vacations. The grand prize was \$50. The show was about entertaining the studio audience and the viewers at home, not changing someone's tax bracket.

There was a celebrity panel who would ask "yes" or "no" questions of each contestant in an effort to determine what his or her occupation was, and usually, the contestant's line of work was rather rare. For instance, the very, first contestant was a hat check girl at the Stork Club, a famous night club in New York City.

I imagine you have heard the question, "Is it bigger than a bread box?" That question originated on the show *What's My Line*. Steve Allen, one of the celebrity panelists first asked the question, "Is it bigger than a bread box?" in January of 1953. That question became a staple on the show, and it spread throughout our culture. At some point during the life of the show, the contestant was a man who made bread boxes. Steve Allen correctly guessed the man's occupation after another panelist asked, "Is it bigger than a bread box?" and the show's host, John Daly, burst out laughing.

For many, the most enjoyable part of the show was when a celebrity guest would appear. Before that guest came on stage, each member of the panel would don a blind fold. Each panelist would ask a question in an effort to determine the identity of the guest. The guest routinely disguised his or her voice. Sometimes, the guest wouldn't speak at all, and the show's host would answer for the guest.

When George Burns and his wife Gracie appeared as guests, they didn't speak because their voices are so familiar. Rather, they would knock once for a "no", twice for "yes."

When the movie star Rosalind Russell appeared as guest celebrity, she used a gruff, male-sounding voice. After the panel had determined that the guest was in the movies, one of the panelists asked, "Would you say that you usually play the part of the leading man?" The audience roared with laughter.

If you have access to the internet at your house, I would encourage you to go to youtube.com where you can pull up and watch old episodes of the show. They are hilarious.

Jesus was much more than a celebrity guest who made a brief appearance in this world. He didn't drop in for ten minutes. He was here in the flesh for 33 plus years. By His Holy Spirit, He is still present in this world today.

Everyone who does not have a personal relationship with Him has been blindfolded by Satan. The Scriptures teach, "In their case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4).

If you are unsure or unclear as to the true identity of Jesus, if you have not recognized His voice, my prayer is that the Spirit of God would take off that spiritual blindfold that Satan has put on you, and that you would see Jesus for who He really and truly is.

Last week, I began a message entitled, “Uncovering the Undercover Jesus.” When Jesus came into the world, very few people were able to recognize Him. In fact, initially, it appears that Jesus wanted to keep His identity a secret. When Jesus healed those who were demon possessed, the demons often tried to announce who Jesus was. We read in Mark 1:34, “And He would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew Him.” On other occasions, Jesus healed people, and Jesus commanded them to keep quiet.

What is it that Jesus didn’t want credit? Jesus had a job to do. His Father had sent Him here with a work to accomplish. He was to die for our sin. He didn’t want anything to interfere with the accomplishment of that task.

After He completed that work and arose from the dead, He told us to spread that good news throughout the world. If we are going to do that, we must be crystal clear as to what He did and who He is.

Ironically and sadly, when Jesus told some to tell nobody, they went out and told everybody, but when He told us to tell everybody, we haven’t told anybody.

In last week’s message we sought to uncover the mission of Jesus—why He came. Today, we come to the second part of that message. We will uncover the person of Jesus—who He became. We will look at the same set of verses, but instead of His mission, we will look toward His identity.

I believe there are 6 words that summarize well what this text teaches concerning who Jesus is. I usually try to avoid using too many points in a sermon. I mostly attempt to keep a sermon down to 2, 3, 4, maybe 5 points. I’ve been preaching for almost 40 years, and I don’t think I have ever preached a sermon that had 6 points. My mind tells me, one, that is too much material to cover in one sermon, and two, that is too many points for people to remember.

Despite two good reasons for not doing so, my sermon today has 6 points. Our goal is to discover the person of Jesus—who He became. We are going to look at six things Jesus became and how we are to respond to Him because of who He became.

1. Jesus Became Our Substitute: Since He Died for Us, We Are to Live for Him.

Look again at v. 9. We spent more time on this verse two weeks ago, but the message of this one verse is crucial. Jesus tasted death for everyone. As we warned, don’t be misled by that word *taste*. It doesn’t mean that He nibbled death. It does not mean that He sampled it, that He cut off a corner of it and rolled it around in His mouth. Jesus fully experienced death. He actually died. After six anguished hours on the cross, the heart of Jesus quit beating. His lungs quit taking in oxygen and giving off carbon dioxide. His brain waves ceased. His body gave up His spirit. He died, and the Bible teaches He died for you, and you, and you, and you, and me. He was our substitute. That means He took our place and punishment.

In his marvelous book *The Cross of Christ*, John R.W. Stott has a wonderful chapter entitled, “The Self-Substitution of God.” He shows that God’s attributes never act contrary to one another. Instead, they always act in concert with one another. God’s mercy does not act contrary to His holiness. God’s grace does not act contrary to His justice. He does not suspend one to display another. Stott wrote, “The one thing God

could not do in the face of human rebellion was nothing.” He then quotes P.T. Forsyth as having written, “He must either inflict punishment or assume it. And He chose the latter course, as honoring the law while saving the guilty. He took His own judgment.”

Because God is holy and just, He must punish sin. And because He is also merciful and gracious and loving, He stood in our place and received in Himself the judgment we were due. Jesus became our substitute.

Now, because He willingly died for us, we should gladly and willingly live for Him. He took our place in the cross; we should take His place in this world. We should be His feet in this world going where He would go. We should be His hands doing what He would do. We should be His heart loving whom He would love. We should be His eyes and ears seeing and hearing what He would. We should be His voice saying what He would say.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to His Father, “Not My will but Yours be done.” Likewise, each day we should pray, “Lord, not my will but Yours be done in and through my life.”

2. Jesus Became Our Leader: Since He Is Out Front, We Are to Follow Him.

Look at v. 10. We are told, God made Jesus the *founder* of our salvation. That word has been variously translated as *pioneer*, *leader*, *captain*, and *author*. It carries the idea of one who goes out before us and leads the way. The word is used of a man who starts a family into which others are born, of a man who founds a city into which others come to live, of a man who blazes a trail and others use that trail.

During the Obama administration, an administration official gave an interview to the well-known magazine, *The New Yorker*. In the article, the official, who was a national security adviser, described the President’s approach to foreign policy. He characterized President Obama as, “leading from behind.” Conservatives immediately pounced on that phrase, and then, the president denied that he leads from behind.

Regardless, the word here in Hebrews 2:10 describes a person who leads from the front. Jesus doesn’t send us into battle, He leads us into battle. He is our champion, our captain, our leader. He is out front; we are to follow Him.

When I was younger, I remember a song that was sung routinely during the invitation. I remember singing it both at Falls Creek as well as my home church. Listen to the first three verses of the song:

I have decided to follow Jesus,
I have decided to follow Jesus,
I have decided to follow Jesus,
No turning back, no turning back.

The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
No turning back, no turning back.

Tho’ none go with me, I still will follow,

Tho' none go with me, I still will follow,
Tho' none go with me, I still will follow,
No turning back, no turning back.

Let that be our anthem. We will follow Jesus.

3. Jesus Became Our Sanctifier: Since He Makes Us Holy, We Are to Obey Him.

Look at v. 11. We said that to sanctify is to set one apart. We have been set apart to one Person—God and set apart to one Purpose—to serve God. Jesus is the One who has set us apart. He is the Sanctifier, the One who makes us holy.

Look at how this word is used in Hebrews 10:10. We often talk about sanctification as being a process. Over time, we are becoming more and more like Jesus, but this verse speaks of it as being an accomplished fact. How do we square the two because they are two different things?

There was a pastor named Peter Lord who pastored the same church in Florida for 30 years. He went to be with Jesus just last year. He was in his 80's. Many years ago, I heard a sermon he preached. It was on a cassette tape. Do you remember those? In his sermon he said this: "I am as righteous as Jesus Christ is righteous."

I remember thinking that is a bold thing to say, but it is also true. If you are truly a Christian, you can say that, too. If you are a follower of Jesus, you are as righteous as Jesus Christ is righteous. How so? Jesus didn't die just to take away your sin. He died to give you something, too.

Many say that Romans is the greatest letter that Paul wrote. I wouldn't disagree with that assessment. I want to show you a few verses in Romans. Look at 1:16-17. Here we see why Paul wrote the letter. Look also at 4:4-5. He uses Abraham as an illustration. We are made righteous the same way Abraham was made righteous—by faith.

There are two kinds of righteousness just as there are two kinds of holiness. The first is positional. We are righteous or holy because we are in Christ. The second is practical. Over time we are to live out and become what we are. We become righteous positionally by trusting Jesus. We become righteous practically by obeying Jesus, day by day, and moment by moment. The first happens instantaneously. The second takes a lifetime of obeying God. Over time, little by little we become practically what we already are positionally.

We are half way through the six things that Jesus became. It is difficult to remember six things, but I want to give you a pneumonic device to help. Let me give you an example of that. When I was in fourth grade, I had difficulty spelling the word language. That is a hard word for a fourth grader to spell. My teacher gave me a pneumonic device. She said, "Just remember the phrase: "Lil Abner never gets under a gate easily." For years, on up into college, I would repeat that sentence as I spelled language.

Let me give you something to remember the six points of today's message: "Sam loves Sally but despises Harriet." The first letter of each word reminds you of the first letter of each point as to who Jesus is. The first three letters are: **S-L-S**. Jesus is our Substitute, Leader, and Sanctifier. **S**-Substitute. **L**-Leader. **S**-Sanctifier.

Now, we are going to look at the last three: **B-D-H**.

4. Jesus Became Our Brother: Since He Shows the Way, We Are to Stay Close to Him.

Look at the end of v. 11. Then in vv. 12-13, the author of Hebrews quotes from the OT three times. The first quotation comes from Psalm 22, and the remaining two both come from the prophecy of Isaiah 8. The author of Hebrews portrays Jesus as the one speaking these words.

The first words found in Psalm 22 are spoken to God. Any Jewish Christian in the first century would have been familiar with Psalm 22. In that psalm we find a beautiful yet difficult portrayal of Jesus and His death on the cross. Let's look at several verses from that psalm. Notice vv. 1, 14-18. Verse 22 is the one quoted in Hebrews 2. This is understood to have been spoken after Jesus' resurrection.

By the way, did you know that Jesus never addressed the disciples as brothers until after His resurrection? Before He was raised, He called them *disciples*; He called them *friends*; He called them by their name; He gave some of the them a new name or a nickname. Only after the resurrection did He call them brothers. In John 20, Jesus met Mary after His resurrection. He gave her an assignment. He said, "Go to My brothers," and He gave her a message to tell them.

If you are a follower of Jesus, He is your brother. He is your elder brother. As a good older brother, he wants to encourage you. Jesus encourages us by bringing the focus back on His Father. He will tell of His Father, and He will sing praise to God. This verse portrays Jesus as a worship leader. You can't help but worship God when you get around Jesus. He's not going to talk about last night's ball game. He is going to talk about His Father.

Isaiah 8:17-18 are the words of the prophet Isaiah, but they are presented as words of Jesus. Isaiah 7 contains a prophecy about the birth of Jesus as does Isaiah 9. Between the two, in chapter 8, the author of Hebrews tells us, "Here is something your elder Brother is going to say. The first is an encouragement by way of example. Jesus says, "I'm going to wait for YHWH." If Jesus had to wait on His Father, we need to learn to wait on God, too.

Isaiah 8:18 needs a little explanation. Isaiah had two sons. Both were given prophetic names. Isaiah's present looked bleak, but the names of his sons pointed to the future. He was saying, "We know God is on the throne; so, we can look to the future with hope."

Likewise, Jesus is saying, "Don't get trapped in the past. Don't get paralyzed by the present. Embrace the future. You can have hope."

Our elder brother promotes three things: praise, trust, and hope. Because Jesus shows the way, stay close to Him. Listen to what He has to say. Follow His example.

5. Jesus Became Our Deliverer: Since He Fights for Us, We Are to Share His Victory.

Look at Hebrews 2:14-15. Jesus came to destroy the devil who has the power of death. He succeeded in doing that when He arose from the dead. Because He arose, we

are delivered from the fear of death. Every victory Jesus has won and will win, automatically becomes ours because we are in Him. We are on the same team.

On February 13th, two football teams will meet in Los Angeles to play the Super Bowl. The players on the winning team will get a Super Bowl ring to commemorate their victory. You may wonder about the players who don't get to play in the game. Maybe they are third or fourth string, and they never get to play a single down. Do they get a ring? Yes, they do. What if they were recently acquired and haven't been on the team very long. Do they get ring. Yep. What if they are injured? They don't even suit up. They just stand on the sideline. They still will get a ring. What if they play and they make a crucial mistake? Maybe they fumble the ball away to the opponent, miss an extra point, or miss an easy tackle and let the other team score. If their team ends up winning, do they still get a Super Bowl ring. You better believe it.

When Jesus wins, His entire team shares in the victory. Some of you have gotten hurt and walked to the sideline. Some of you have played your position poorly; you have fumbled at crucial moments. Listen to me, let the past remain in the past. Our ultimate victory is not based on our performance. It rests entirely on His shoulders. His victory is assured. That means ours is, too.

You remember the sentence: "Sam loves Sally but despise Harriet." We have covered **SLS**: Substitute, Leader, and Sanctifier. Then, we looked at **B** and **D**: Brother and Deliverer. We have just one more—**H**.

6. Jesus Became Our High Priest: Since He Suffered for Us, We Are to Receive His Help.

Look at vv. 16-18. Jesus became one of us. He took on human flesh, but He didn't take on our sin nature. Jesus has certainly suffered, but He never sinned. He never disobeyed God, not once. Because He had a human nature but remained sinless, He became the perfect Savior. Using Old Testament pictures, Jesus served as both our High Priest and as the sacrifice. Once a year, the High Priest would enter into the Holy of Holies, and he would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice onto the seat that sat atop the Ark of the Covenant. It was known as the Mercy Seat and the throne of God.

Jesus shed His blood on our behalf, and like a High Priest, He represented us to God. He didn't go into an earthly temple made by human hands. He went to the very throne room of God in heaven. God accepted that sacrifice Jesus made. High Priests had to make a sacrifice every year, but Jesus made one sacrifice that was good and is good for all time. He was the perfect sacrifice; no other sacrifice is needed.

We have a High Priest who knows us perfectly, loves us perfectly, and is able to represent us perfectly. As we look to Him, we can receive from Him the very help we need at the moment we need it.

When you were younger, did you ever say to your parents, or a teacher, or another adult, "You just don't understand"? Did your children ever look at you and say, "You just don't understand"? Have you ever felt that way when someone tried to encourage you? "They just don't understand the way I feel, the pressures I'm under, the enormity of the problems I face." That may be true. I'm not going to argue that point. I will say this: You can never look at Jesus and say to Him truthfully, "You just don't understand!"

He does understand, and He stands ready to help you, to guide you, to comfort you, and to lead you into a victorious future. So, what hurt are you holding onto? What difficulty are you facing? Tell it to Jesus. He is exactly who we need.

He is our **S-Substitute: Live for Him.** He is our **L-Leader: Follow Him.** He is our **S-Sanctifier: Obey Him.** He is our **B-Brother: Stay Close to Him.** He is our **D-Deliverer: Share His Victory.** He is our **H-High Priest: Receive His Help.**