

## **“He Came to Be My Brother”**

**Hebrews 2:10-18**

**Dec. 29, 2024 (Chr. 1-C)**

**St. Paul’s Lutheran, North Freedom**

*In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are being made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.” And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again he says, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.”*

*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Heb. 2:10-18 NIV84)*

In the name of the Christ-child, our Savior Jesus, dear fellow children of God:

The titles and key lines of Christmas hymns tell the story of our Savior’s birth by themselves. String them together: “O Little Town of Bethlehem, “ on a “Silent Night,” was born an “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly, Away in a Manger.” “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night, A Glory Filled the Midnight Sky.” “Angels from the Realms of Glory” proclaimed, “Gloria in Excelsis Deo”: “Glory to the Newborn King!” “Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful: Let All Together Praise our God!”

A hymn that’s not from the Christmas section of *Christian Worship* also proclaims our Savior’s birth. It’s Martin Luther’s “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice”: “The Son obeyed his Father’s will, was born of virgin mother, and, God’s good pleasure to fulfill, he came to be my brother” (#557 v. 6). This profound truth is expressed in our text from Hebrews. Let us ponder this mystery of Christmas about the Son of God, that **He Came to Be My Brother**.

What makes this statement so surprising is when we consider the vast contrast between us human beings and the holy Son of God. While we human beings were originally created in God’s holy image, that image was shattered when Adam and Eve fell into sin. We lost any ability to be holy or to make ourselves holy. Sin permeates our nature; it warps our minds, poisons our tongues, and saturates our bodies. We cry with Paul who wrote, “What I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing” (Ro. 7:19). I know it my own life. I have good intentions, but I find my sinful nature steering me in the wrong direction, again and again. As a result, we’re all lost and condemned creatures, and not God’s children by nature.

But God still wanted us to be his children. And, since “the children have flesh and blood, [Jesus] shared their humanity.” He put on flesh and blood to be one with us. His purpose in doing this was “bringing many sons to glory” and to be “the author of [our] salvation.” The holy, perfect Son of God would be “made perfect through suffering.” That statement boggles the mind. How could the Son of God, already perfect in himself, be “made perfect”? And “through suffering”?

Suffering causes imperfections, wounds, pain and sorrow. The idea of “made perfect” here is not “make Jesus holy,” but in the sense of perfecting his work, or allowing him to reach his goal. Through the holy Son of God’s humiliation and suffering, we sinful human beings get to be lifted up “to glory”, and made holy. The child born of Mary, by his righteous life, by his suffering and death, earned for us the right to be called children of God.

This is the astounding result: “Both the one who makes men holy and those who are being made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.” Thanks to Jesus, we’re now in the same family! The writer to Hebrew Christians who knew their Old Testament pointed out the Messiah’s words to that effect in Psalm 22:22: “I will declare your name to my brothers.” Yes, he calls us his siblings! And from Isaiah 8:18, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.” Jesus calls us God’s children, and he’s not ashamed of it!

How thankful we are that Jesus came to bring us to glory, and make us God’s children through faith in him—which makes Jesus our brother! Jesus is not a “goody-two-shoes” brother who’s so perfect that we could never live up to him or follow him. No, he’s our caring, concerned older brother who’s there for us, who’s got our back and helps us. The inspired author to these Hebrew Christians gives some examples in the rest of our text of our brother’s help.

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.” Jesus had called the devil “a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). It’s true. Adam and Eve bit into the forbidden fruit and died—not at that moment, but death was now in them and all their descendants. But our brother Jesus came to nullify Satan’s power by not giving in to his temptations, by suffering the penalty for our sins and dying on the cross, and then rising from the dead. So while the devil prowls and roars, he will not snare those who rest secure in our brother Jesus’ arms.

Along with that, Jesus sets “free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” Death still looms over us all as the consequence of sin. But because our brother Jesus, in his flesh and blood, rose from the dead, we no longer need to fear death. Jesus transforms death into the portal where the soul goes to heaven. And as he rose in his body, one day he will come to raise our lowly bodies and transform them to be like his glorious body. Our brother has set us free from that slavery to sin and death!

Right now, our brother Jesus has been “made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God.” We already noted how Jesus served as a high priest who offered his body, his flesh and blood, up as a sacrifice to make atonement for all our sins. He still serves as a merciful and faithful high priest. When we sin in weakness, when we give in to our sinful nature, our brother Jesus pleads for us in heaven to our Father up there, to forgive us and restore us as his children.

And, because “he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” Like a big brother who holds his little brother’s hand when the bully comes near, we can be assured that Jesus is here to protect us from the bully Satan’s temptations. He knows what it’s like to wrestle with temptation and feelings. He’s without sin, but he feels our pain. Jesus promises that we will conquer temptation in him.

In the days and weeks to come, Christmas decorations get taken down and put away, and our days go back to normal. But let’s never put the Christ-child away, on a shelf. He desires to be in your life always. Remember, “he came to be our brother.” Amen.