

Thursday, April 23, 2020

Turn off the outside “noise” for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God’s Word.
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.

HEBREWS 4:14-16(TNIV)

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is **unable to empathize with our weaknesses**, but we have one who has been **tempted in every way, just as we are** — yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ **Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**

— PART 3 —

*I found that when a passage of Scripture has been very familiar to me for a long time — such as this passage! — if I will simply **slow down** . . . take my time . . . and read thoughtfully and reflectively, it can become alive to me in new and fresh ways.*

❶ *“For we do not have a high priest who is **unable to empathize with our weaknesses**, but we have one who has been **tempted in every way, just as we are** — yet he did not sin” —*

Some people will suggest that Jesus didn’t really struggle with temptation like we do, because he was God. Listen to Kent Hughes insightfully counter this error:

“Jesus’ experience of temptation was greater because the stakes were so high — and because he never gave in.

As C. S. Lewis explained:

‘A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means — the only complete realist.’

Jesus knew depths and pains we can never know, precisely because he did not sin! No human was ever tempted like Jesus was! ‘Because he himself **suffered** when he was tempted, **he is able to help those who are being tempted**’ (2:18).”

R. KENT HUGHES, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, Volume 1, Hebrews 1-9 (Preaching the Word).

Hughes then shares a perfect analogy for the way Jesus is touched by our weaknesses:

“...if you have two pianos in the same room and a note is struck on one, the same note will gently respond on the other, though not touched by another’s hand. This is called ‘sympathetic resonance.’

Christ’s instrument was just like ours in every way. And hear this! He took that instrument, that body, to Heaven with him. It is his priestly body. And when a chord is struck in the weakness of our human instrument, it resonates in his! There is no note of human experience that does not play on Christ’s exalted human instrument. ‘For we do *not* have a high priest who is *unable to sympathize with our weaknesses*’ — **praise his name!**”

R. KENT HUGHES, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, Volume 1, Hebrews 1-9 (Preaching the Word).

Hughes concludes by drawing out the implications of Jesus’ capacity for sympathy:

“**Jesus, our high priest, has an unequalled capacity for sympathy.** It goes far beyond the intellectual, because it is truly experiential. Jesus does not just **imagine** how we feel — he **feels** it! The word for ‘sympathize’ here means ‘**to share the experience of another**’ — to sympathize through common experience. ***The most sensitive man who ever lived feels with us.***

Whatever we may be going through, there is not a note we can play, not a melody or a dirge, no minor key, no discordant note, **that does not evoke a ‘sympathetic resonance’ in Jesus.** He mastered the instrument while he was here on earth, and he wears it in Heaven. ***Do you want sympathy? Do not go anywhere else.*** Dare not go to anyone but him!”

R. KENT HUGHES, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, Volume 1, Hebrews 1-9 (Preaching the Word).

Jesus feels what we are going through, and He responds to our need:

PSALM 116:1-2 (NLTse)

¹ I love the LORD because he **hears** my voice
and my prayer for mercy.

² **Because he bends down to listen,
I will pray as long as I have breath!**

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Thank you, Lord Jesus, our great high priest, FRIEND OF SINNERS — that **you are “able to empathize with our weaknesses.”** You **resonate** with what we feel. You **understand precisely** the temptations we are facing, the worries that make our minds spin, the fears that leave us numb. Most of all, thank you for hearing our cries for help, our pleas for mercy. Thank you for “bending down to listen”!

Pastor Doug

P.S. We would love to hear from you! How are you doing right now? And we would love to pray for you! Email us at info@bethanyonline.net

P.P.S. Keep checking our “ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TODAY” webpage — we will try to post fresh encouragement **every day** during this crisis!

P.P.P.S. And watch our **LIVE-STREAM Worship Service** this coming Sunday at 10:30 A.M. for more encouragement.