

Christ's Identification with Man

a sermon in the series
Hebrews: An Epistle of Encouragement

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Hebrews 2:9-18

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Paul Harvey, several years ago, told a story about a man and some birds that has become a holiday classic. No one can quite tell a story like Paul Harvey, but I'd like to share with you a portion of that story, at least my version of it. It was about a man who was not a scrooge. He was kind and decent, mostly a good man, very generous and upright in his dealings with others. He just didn't believe all this incarnation stuff which churches proclaimed at Christmas time. It just didn't make sense, and he was just too honest to pretend otherwise. He just could not swallow the Jesus story, about God coming to earth as a man and all the other things that go with the Christmas story. So, in the evening on Christmas Eve, his family went to their local church services, and he stayed home.

Shortly after the family had driven away, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries get heavier and heavier, and then went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper, where minutes later he was startled by a thudding sound. Then another, and then another, some sort of thump or thud. At first he thought it must be somebody throwing snowballs at his living room window, so he went to the front living room window to investigate. Instead of snowball hurlers he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They'd been caught in the storm and in a futile search for shelter had tried desperately to fly through his large land-

scape window. Well, he couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, and he remembered the barn where his children had stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter if he could just direct the birds into it.

Quickly, he put on his coat, his galoshes, and tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on the light, but the birds did not come in. He figured food would entice them, so he hurried back to the house, fetched some bread crumbs and sprinkled them in the snow, making the trail to the wide yellow-lit doorway of the stable. But to his dismay, the birds ignored the bread crumbs, and continued to flap around helplessly in the snow. He tried catching them. He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around them and waving his arms, but instead he scattered them in every direction, except into the warm, lighted barn. And then he realized, they were afraid of him.

"To them," he reasoned, "I'm a strange, terrifying creature. If only, if only I could think of some way to let them know they can trust me, that I'm not trying to hurt them, but to help them. But how?" Any move he made tended to frighten them, confuse them. They just would not follow. They would not be led or shooed, because they feared him. "If only I could think like a bird," he thought to himself, "and mingle with them and speak their language, then I could tell them not to be afraid, then I could show them the way to the safe, warm barn. Then they could see, then they could hear, then they could understand." It was at that moment the bells from the far distant church rang. He sank his knees deep into the snow as the whole message of the Christmas Story came ringing into his head. There on that cold Christmas Eve he realized it all. He understood the reason why Christ came as a man----so that He might help us find the warmth of God's love.

A good story. But there's a problem with the story. It doesn't really tell us about the incarnation. It's a spine-tingling, emotionally charging and heart-grabbing story, but it falls very short of what Jesus really did. Jesus didn't come to be one of us so that he could communicate to us. That was not the deal. I want you to turn in your Bibles to the true story, and a detailed one that sets the record straight, Hebrews chapter two, verses nine through eighteen. I want to speak on "Christ's identification With Man."

This passage is very timely. It's providential that this would be the text that we would study on this Christmas Eve day. More than recounting the Incarnation or Christmas story, our text tells us not only the theological principles, but also the tenable and most important truths of what we celebrate---that Christ became a man and thereby redeemed a people unto Himself. A manger without a cross is just a feeding trough. And so, the writer of Hebrews lays out before us, theologically, as well as practically, the tangible ways of Christ's incarnation, that to these Jewish Christians would have been understandable. On the other hand, we Gentiles may not see these things and just gloss over them in our reading. I want to bring these rich truths out before you that you might enjoy the riches of what Jewish Christians would have known and enjoyed almost two thousand years ago.

Let's first look at the condescension of Christ so that He might identify Himself with man. God condescends and identifies with man in at least six ways. First, the writer shows that Jesus was subjected to a lower position than even angels. We have already talked about this in verse nine.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels...(Hebrews 2:9)

It is an amazing thing. Stop, ponder, and think for a moment. The God who created the angels is the same God that in His condescension and humility, subjected Himself to a position lower than the very angels He created. We all agree that man is the bottom of the hierarchical order of God when it comes to beings having immortal souls. Angels and people are immortal, but mankind is on the bottom of that hierarchical chain. Yet, God Almighty who is Lord over all, has subjected Himself to a humiliation lower than the angels He created. We'll see why in just a moment.

The second way we see Christ's identification with man and His condescension in our text is that He subjected Himself to a flesh and blood body. Look at verse fourteen,

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same... (Hebrews 2:14)

I must once again ask you to look at a specific phrase only to tell you that we'll deal with it later. For now I want you to look at the words "the children."

Christ took not upon Himself the form of a man, meaning He did not perform some "Power Ranger" metamorphosis; He didn't go through some transformation and appear like a man. The truth is He literally became a man. He was conceived and born, and He was a man. He did not just take on a body, but verse seventeen tells us He took on every component that makes up a human being. Look at verse seventeen,

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto [his] brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things [pertaining] to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:17)

Again, I must ask you to underscore the words "his brethren." They will become critically important by the conclusion of this message. In every aspect of human nature as to what composes a human being, Jesus received every part of the human composition. He is not God looking like man or appearing as a man. Nor is He a phantom, as some have taught. He is literally in every cell of His body, a man. The truth of the incarnation is God literally became one of us.

Why did he take upon Himself a body and subject Himself to a position lower than the angels? Again the answer is Hebrews chapter two verse nine,

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (Hebrews 2:9)

The answer is that “he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” The writer of Hebrews continually refers to the death of Jesus. His death as a man has everything to do with why He became a man. Two reasons: first, God cannot die. I often think we sometimes misunderstand preachers when they say, “And God died on the cross.” Yes, God died on the cross because Jesus died on the cross, but God did not cease His existence, nor did God literally die. God cannot die. God could not die, for God is an eternal Spirit. He is not like a man and therefore, God could not atone for man’s sin. Not only did God not have a body, but neither is God in man’s category. He cannot be the substitute for something He is not. That is a theological, moral, and physical impossibility, even for God. Second, God could not send an angel to die for us because angels do not die. And, as in the case of God, angels are not in the same class as mankind, and therefore cannot be man’s substitute.

If man was to have any hope, the only proposition was that God Himself should become a man in order to subject Himself to death that He might die in our stead. It bears repeating this morning, what I have said before, that Jesus in His earthly body, as far as I am concerned, would never have died had He not laid His life down. He said,

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. (John 10:17)

Jesus’ body in every aspect is just exactly like our body except one. Jesus’ intellect was in every way just like your intellect except for one, He did not inherit the depravity that every man since Adam has inherited. The law of God states that “the soul that sins it shall surely die.” Since there was no inherent corruption in the body of Christ, I believe He was in a body that would live immortally. He gave His life up freely. He became subject to the very guilt of our sins, and therefore He gave up His life in our place. Only as a man could He do that.

The fourth way the condescension of Christ and His identification with us is seen is in the type of death He died. Not only did He subject Himself to death, but also He subjected Himself to the most horrible of deaths. He subjected Himself to suffering of the worse kind. Look at verse ten,

For it became him, for whom [are] all things, and by whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (Hebrews 2:10)

“It is appointed unto men once to die.” I will die if the Lord tarries. We all taste death. But Jesus just didn’t die, He suffered a death ten thousand times worse than any mortal human being’s. He suffered physically a most excruciating death, but, dear friends, the spiritual agonies of His soul and mind defy human description today. The full weight of our sins collided with His soul as He hung on the cross. We cannot dare imagine the depth of pain that He endured. He suffered like none has ever suffered. The Bible says that he was “smitten of God.” When a man strikes you, it can bring pain. But can you imagine the blow of God? Can you imagine that terrible, all-powerful arm raring back and striking His own Son with the force of His anger and wrath against every sin that you and I have ever committed? Those are the terrors and agonies that Jesus was subjected to. He did it for you and me. Oh, what a glorious thing this morning to consider. It is a song that

should be sung by every one of us that's saved and sung without reservation, that is, with all of our might. "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men!"

Let us examine the fifth consideration of our Lord's condescension. Not only was He subject to suffering, subject to death, subject to a flesh and bone body, and subject to a position lower than the angels, but He's also subject to servanthood. Look at verse seventeen again. God the creator, who is to be served, subjected Himself to serve others. It says,

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto [his] brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things [pertaining] to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:17)

Here is something that the Jewish Christians reading this letter would have understood. To be a priest, one is a mediator between God and man. Anyone from a Levitical system of priests would have understood that it is Jesus being referred to here as a high priest. As a priest He was a servant, for priests served the people by offering up their sacrifices for them. The priest sacrificed for the sins of the people. He was the mediator. If a dispute between two people occurred, they would not find somebody to mediate who was biased to one of the parties. Both parties agreed on a person who could arbitrate and mediate fairly and who could understand both sides. You could say that the mediator must be able to identify with both parties. He should be able to relate to and understand the concerns of the disagreeing factions. Jesus Christ, in order to become a faithful high priest, literally became one of us that He could be able to identify with us and be a mediator between God and us.

Another way that a high priest serves His people is that he makes intercession for them, he prays for them. Jesus is our high priest. You can read His priestly prayer in John seventeen. He prays for His apostles, but not for them only. Jesus says to the Father,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. (John 17:20)

That means He prayed for you and me. But His intercession for us did not end with the prayer of John seventeen. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus "ever liveth to make intercession" for us. Thus the author of this blessed epistle tells us that Christ subjected Himself to become a servant. I don't know if you're getting the irony of all of this as it struck me again this week. Here is God who ought to be served by every one of us, and served most diligently with all of our lives, yet we will never serve Him as ably and capably as He serves us even this very moment. What glorious humility! What glorious condescension! May God be praised!

And then lastly, the writer deals with our Lord's condescension, by discussing His temptation. Verse eighteen states,

*For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.
(Hebrews 2:18)*

Jesus, in order for us to be able to identify with Him, endured temptation. This has been a controversy among good men for centuries, the subject---the temptation of Christ. Was Christ able to sin, or was He not able? If He was not able to sin, then what is it to say He was tempted? Some, arguing for Christ's ability as a man to sin, say if He was unable to sin then it means nothing to say "He was tempted" and He cannot really know our experience of temptation.

I personally believe in the impeccability of Christ. The impeccability of Christ means Christ could not sin. I do not believe that God can sin. And as much as He is fully man, He is also fully God. Now, dear friends, I must encourage great caution in studying the dual natures of Christ. The caution must be this, that we do not know, and the Bible does not explain, how the divine nature of God and the humanity of Jesus unionized. How did, in the womb of Mary, humanity and deity come together? There was a union made, so blended into one are both of these natures, that you and I cannot find the end of one and the beginning of the other. Theologians call it the hypostatic union of Christ. Two natures yet one person; two natures not mixed, each nature keeping its identity and attributes. Although having two distinct natures, the Christ is only one person, one indivisible person with two natures.

Certainly a man can be tempted and enticed, but we must remember, there is no inner corruption in Christ to be enticed. He is God Almighty. Frankly, I don't understand the temptation of Christ. To me it's one of the most amazing things in doctrine and theology. I can only assure you of this, that this book says He was tempted. He was tempted that He might know how to help you when you're tempted. I don't understand how God, who cannot even think an evil thought, could be tempted with sin, but He was. I do not understand how He has no beginning, but He has none. Nor do I understand how the preincarnate Christ became an embryo in the womb of Mary, but He did. Our understanding of truth does not establish truth nor does our lack of understanding erode the same. What humility for holy God to be made subject to the evil temptations of the devil.

The condescension and identification had to occur if God could redeem us. Even God works within His own laws. Look at verse seventeen again.

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto [his] brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things [pertaining] to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people (Hebrews 2:17).

Here's where the Paul Harvey story stops being a good idea of what happened in Bethlehem's manger. God did more than become like us so He could show us the way. He literally became one of us in order to atone for us, or redeem us. The word reconciliation has the concept of redemption here. It goes back to the word we looked at here last week, and that is the word "propitiation", a sacrifice made to appease the justice of God. It is a sacrifice made to purchase a

ransom. In this case the people of God. God had established a price to be paid for sin; the price was eternal death. That was the only way the sin debt could be paid. Jesus came, became that sacrifice that appeased, satisfied the justice of God that every one of His people could be redeemed.

When the early Jewish Christian read these words, he knew immediately what the author was talking about, he was talking about the concept of kinsman redeemer. The concept of kinsman redeemer is what Christ came and fulfilled. The concept is that only one that was related to you could redeem you. I kept calling attention to the words “brethren” and “children” throughout the text. These are not words that the writer of this book used without thought. The Jewish law of redemption was to be administered by a family member. If you were in slavery, a relative could pay the price of ransom that would release you and grant you freedom. Neither a good friend or a neighbor could be a kinsman redeemer. The first scriptural qualification that God gave in the Old Testament law for redemption was that a relative was to be the redeemer. The laws of kinsman redeemer are found in Leviticus.

And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother [that dwelleth] by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger [or] sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: (Leviticus 25:47-48)

Not only could the kinsman redeem a family member, but also he could redeem family property that had been sold to someone outside the family. The law of kinsman redeemer also applied to marrying a widow who had no children. That fact is beautifully illustrated in the book of Ruth. Boaz could marry Ruth because he was a near kinsman. She was not a slave, but he was purchasing the right to extend the family name of her husband that had died. Therefore the law established that neither pity, love, nor any amount of power would avail unless kinship was established.

Now, my question for you is, why did God design the law of kinsman redeemer to work this way? Why not allow anyone who would take pity on a slave to purchase his or her freedom? Surely it was a type or shadow predicting the ransom Christ paid on our behalf. He came as one who was like His brethren. He was our kinsman redeemer.

We are now moving a little deeper into the cross and Christ's atoning death for us. Is it justice for an innocent person to suffer in the place of the guilty? No, it is not justice for an innocent party to suffer when they're innocent. It is no more justice than for a guilty person not to suffer the penalty. The law cannot make this demand of the innocent and be just. Was it right for one who had so perfectly honored God and kept His law perfectly to endure its lawful penalty? How do we escape the question that it might have been unjust for Christ suffering on our behalf?

To say that there was no other way to save us does not answer the question. In fact, if that is your answer, you are saying the end justifies the means. You make God a practitioner of situational ethics, saying that He believed that it doesn't matter how you do it, so long as you get the job accomplished. Far be it from God to believe in or practice situational ethics. God in His wisdom or His righteousness could not demand an innocent man to suffer for the guilty, it would not be justice. God has established the fact that the guilty must pay the price of his or her sin.

The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin. (Deuteronomy 24:16)

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. (Ezekiel 18:20)

But Pastor, that is the plan of the gospel that Christ suffered innocently on our behalf! No, that's incomplete and comes short of the Gospel. This statement, left by itself, is neither the justice of God nor the plan of atonement. God's justice does not demand that an innocent party suffer for a crime that they have not committed. Justice is not served that way. Just any innocent man bearing the punishment of a guilty one may work with human government, but that arrangement can never meet the demands of a righteous, holy God. Then how are we to understand Christ's death in our place? What is the Gospel?

The law could not make the innocent suffer on behalf of the guilty, although, often the innocent do suffer because of the guilty. But the law cannot make this demand. However, the law of God made provision for the innocent to pay for the crimes of the guilty. It made such provision in the kinsman redeemer laws. The atonement of Jesus is founded upon the fact of Christ's union with his people. He came as a kinsman redeemer. Jesus came as a human being and as our elder brother! I do not speak sacrilegiously, I am speaking scripturally. Your Brother came to rescue you.

Remember earlier I said God could not die, and even if He could, His death would have no benefit to the sinner because God is not a human being. Therefore, it would not satisfy justice for Jesus Christ to come to this world in His preincarnate state, and not as a man, and die on a cross. However, God provided the perfect substitute by making His Son a man. To this Christ voluntarily submitted.

There is a union with Jesus Christ and His redeemed. Forever in the mind and heart of God, you and I and Christ have been one. The Bible says as much many different times. For example,

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. (Ephesians 1:4)

Because of this union, Christ took flesh and blood and made our union with Him a flesh and blood reality! It was not some notional reality in the mind of God, it became real. God became us. When our beloved Lord Jesus laid His life upon the altar of the cross, the propitiation rendered unto God was not made by a stranger or even a close friend. My dear friend, it came from our Brother, who is the head of a spiritual body, and we are members of it. His death for us was just and satisfied the laws of kinsman redeemer.

Ah, how marvelous is this truth that God has forever loved us and sought to redeem us for Himself. The Bible says that we, the church, have a head----His name is Jesus. We are the members of His body, a family whose royalty exceeds all the crowned heads of earth. The Apostle Paul in Romans chapter five verse eighteen makes our Lord's identification with us completely clear and understandable. Jesus made Himself as one of us and was able to redeem us as His people.

Therefore as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [the free gift came] upon all men unto justification of life. (Romans 5:18)

God has dealt with mankind by the law of representation. Adam represented all of mankind in the Garden of Eden. God sees the human race as comprised of one flesh. We are in union with Adam. Adam stood before God as our representative, our fountainhead, if you please, and when he sinned we became guilty also. My dear friend, you may protest and say you did not participate in Adam's villainy. Ah, but you did. It is more than being guilty by association. Adam represented you perfectly in that he did what any of us would have done. Now you may say that's not fair, but be careful when criticizing, because it's the same principle by which we are saved and redeemed. It's not fair that Jesus should hang on a cross and suffer for that which He did not do, but because He is in union with us, He suffered our guilt. Not guilty by doing, but guilty because he loved us and became one with us. And, therefore, He satisfied the justice of God for us.

That's why I say to you that you must be careful and explain what you mean when you say Jesus died for all people. I do believe that the death of Christ, in one sense, is for all men, saved and unsaved. But His death has a different application for the elect of God than it does for the non-elect. In other words, it's only effectual in redeeming the sins of those who believe. That is the ransom. His blood was a ransom paid to the holy justice of God. If it is any other way then you must say that Jesus paid the sin debt of those now in hell's torment. You must say that He is in union with those who are now burning in hell. How can this be? How can He be in union with those who are in hell? How can they be there if He redeemed them? No, it doesn't work that way. God redeemed a people unto Himself, and somehow His death ensures their salvation.

What then are the consequences and implications for mankind? Well, the writer of Hebrews lays out four consequences of our Lord's condescension and identification with man. First, our union with Christ. Again, I want you to see this beautiful union. In chapter two verse eleven he says,

For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified [are] all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. (Hebrews 2:11)

"Are all one." You and I were not born when this text was written and, yet, we are listed right there in the words, "he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Christ is the one who sanctifies, and we are the ones whom He is sanctifying. The writer of Hebrews says it is for this reason that Christ is not ashamed to call us "brethren." Once again the writer is emphasizing the kinsmen redeemer relationship. In verse thirteen he does so again.

*And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.
(Hebrews 2:13)*

Christ our Lord will one day present Himself along with us whom He calls, “the children which God hath given me.”

The second consequence and implication of our Lord’s humiliation in becoming a man is it frees us from the fear of death. Look at verse fifteen.

And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Hebrews 2:15)

The fear of death manifests itself in every person, ever born, and in many different ways. There is not a person been born that’s not been afraid of dying. We all show it differently. Some live in denial of death and live as if they will not die. Others get themselves in such busyness that they don’t have time to think about death. Others involve themselves in religion, thinking that religion will take care of the problem of dying. But the truth is every man fears death. But through Jesus Christ and His dying for us, He has taken away the sting of death. When I die, it’s not eternal doom, it’s not eternal condemnation. It will be walking into the glorious presence of God. Jesus took away the curse of death.

Jesus also rendered Satan powerless. This is the third implication and consequence. Verse fourteen,

*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.
(Hebrews 2:14)*

How does Jesus’ dying render the power of Satan to no effect? Well, it doesn’t mean Christians don’t die, nor does it mean that Satan can’t kill you. Revelation chapter two verse ten states some Christians would die by the hand of Satan. The Lord Jesus said in the Gospel according to Matthew chapter ten and verse twenty-eight,

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

If God so permits it, Satan can be the instrument of death.

What then does verse fourteen of Hebrews two mean? It means the only weapon the devil can use to destroy us is for us to die in our sins. That’s his only weapon to hold against you, your sins against God, the sins for which you have rejected Christ’s atonement as the payment. His only power of death is over those who have not had their sins washed away by the blood of Christ. The only reason anybody goes to hell is because of their sin, and all Satan can do is fight desper-

ately to keep you from realizing that there was an atonement made for sin, and to keep you from the One who can forgive you. And so today, dear friend, that's the only thing he has to hold you in his slavery. Be free today, run to Christ, for He can forgive.

Fourth and lastly, we see one more consequence of our Lord's becoming a man, and that is His continual help. We have through Christ Jesus help by one who has been there. Hebrews chapter two and verse eighteen states our hope for help.

*For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.
(Hebrews 2:18)*

The word "succour" means to "aid." Because of Christ suffering temptation He is able to "aid" or help "them that are tempted." He knows what you go through when you are tempted; He's been there Himself. If we will call upon Him for help, He will know exactly how to help us. God knows how, if you only call upon Him, to make a way of escape for you.

Friends, my time has hastily and sadly gotten away from me. Sadly, I say, because I'm having great joy in sharing these blessed truths with you on this Christmas Eve. Since it's Christmas, would you allow me to have a little more joy? I told my wife yesterday, I didn't know where to go with all of these verses, all of the themes. I literally could spend four weeks on this text. I want you to look at one more thing, verse ten. Note just four words in verse ten,

For it became him

"It became Him." If I look at my wife and say, "Sweetheart, that dress becomes you," I'm saying that it's beautiful on her, or that it's made for her. It is fitting for her to wear such a beautiful dress. This is what this text is saying concerning Christ. It is saying that it was fitting for Jesus to do all that He did in becoming a man and dying on our behalf. The work of redemption was suited to Him and in accord with the character of God. To do all of this, to condescend and be humbled, to be identified with us, and to die is fitting with the character of God. "It became Him." It was consistent with His divine attributes, that the Son should, for a season, be made lower than the angels, in order to taste death for His people. It was not only according to God's eternal purpose, but, dear friends, it was also suited to all of His wondrous perfections, to be humiliated like this, so that never was God any more God-like, than when in the person of Jesus on this earth.

Why would such humiliation be so God-like? It would seem far, far from His nature. To be born in stark poverty, in a stable, in a cave, in the lowliest of conditions, surely could not be thought of as becoming to the Son of God. Why was it so beautiful and becoming to the glory of God that His beard should be plucked, by men? How can it be fitting that soldiers should drive spikes through His wrists and feet? Why is it so beautiful and fitting for Jesus to have no place to lay his head, while birds of the air have their nests, and foxes have their holes? Because it exemplifies and honors the one single attribute of God that He loves to demonstrate more than any of His other attributes---His sweet mercy. Mercy so rich as so free! That's why. The act of humiliation

in coming as our elder brother, being one of us, and sacrificing His life, showed the whole of creation that God is a God of grace. Oh, it is in this one attribute of grace that God delights more than in any other attribute. He is never more God-like than when His demonstrating His lavish grace. Glory be to God this morning! Let every saint sing today, "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me." That's what Christmas is all about, and that's what we are all about, those of us that know our kinsman redeemer, Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.