

Sermon 12, Consider Jesus, Hebrews 3:1

Proposition: You need to think about Jesus because of who you are and because of who He is.

- I. Who You Are
 - A. Holy Brethren
 - B. Sharers in a Heavenly Calling
- II. Who Jesus Is
 - A. God's Apostle
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- III. What You Need to Do
 - A. Think About Him
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Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, our passage this morning calls us to consider Jesus. You have probably spent some time this week thinking about food. You may have thought about what to read, watch, and listen to. You may have considered your parents or in-laws far away in another state. But how much time did you dedicate to thinking about Jesus? You're here, and you're here to hear about Him. That's good. What you're going to hear is a call to think about Jesus. Why should you think about Jesus? Because of who you are, and who He is.

I. Who You Are

To lead up to his exhortation to think about Jesus, the writer first of all reminds us of who we are. He gives us two exalted, glorious titles. A few weeks ago, when we looked at the quote from Psalm 8 in ch. 2, I said that the “the maddest maniac, the most high-minded humanist, would hardly dare to say that man is a king resplendent with the glory of the uncreated Almighty.” And I stand by that. The most arrogant philosophers and humanists do not exalt man like the Christian faith does. Who are we?

A. Holy Brethren

We are brethren, to use the archaic form. The regular plural is “brothers.” What does that mean? It means that we are sons of God together, in the same family. The proverb sneeringly says “Blood is thicker than water,” meaning that biological ties outweigh baptism and birth into the family of God. But that proverb is unbiblical, and untrue to experience. Those of you in this room with non-Christian family members know that you feel closer to your Christian brothers and sisters, your church family, than you do to your non-believing relatives. I remember one of you telling me that he had little contact with his non-Christian siblings. “It's like talking to aliens,” he said. Aliens! In a certain sense, that's what the rest of the world is. The holy brethren — the set-apart family — the breed that exists for God — that's what we are; and the flip side of that is that those who are not holy and not brethren are, in a certain sense, alienated from us. We too used to share in that alienation. We too used to walk in malice and envy, hateful and hating

one another. We too used to be cut off from Israel and the life of God. Brothers and sisters, if you don't think the world is alienated from you, from each other, and from God, just listen to its music. Watch its films. Read its bestsellers. You will see that there is what the surgeon general announced on May 3 as a "loneliness epidemic" that is as deadly as smoking 15 cigarettes per day.

But that alienation has been removed. In Christ, the barriers between Jew and Gentile, black and white, man and woman, are gone. No longer do we regard the other sex, the other race, the other culture as an enemy. We have a secure place to stand. We have a home where we belong — the household of God. We are brothers. We have the same Father — God. We have the same mother — the church, the Jerusalem above.

And not only are we brothers in terms of common descent, having all been born again through water and the Spirit; we are brothers as well in our status of holiness. Holiness means existing for God. It means having God and His glory be your purpose in a unique way. To be holy is to have the purpose of glorifying and enjoying God. That binds us together. If my purpose is to seek pleasure and your purpose is also to seek pleasure, we have nothing in common even though we appear to have the same purpose. Why? Because I live for me, for my own pleasure, and I don't care about you. It is a common purpose that divides rather than unites. But if you live for Jesus and I live for Jesus, then we live for Jesus together. I don't see your Jesus as a threat to my Jesus — at least, not if we have a shared understanding of who Jesus really is. (To be fair, those who have a shared understanding of what pleasure is can often get along with one another too, at least for a time.)

So who are you? You are holy brothers. You are fellow citizens with the saints. You share a common national identity, for heaven is your native land. You immediately recognize a fellow exile who is waiting to return to the homeland. And you are members of the household of God. You have the same home as every other Christian, and that home is God's home. After all, you are His child. It's natural that you would live with Him, sharing His home, dwelling in His house forever.

The language of brotherhood is powerful, visceral, emotive. I have six brothers and seven brothers-in-law. They are men whom I can trust implicitly. They share my name, they are related by blood to me or to those who are related by blood to me (nephews and nieces), and they are dedicated to the same goal of walking with Christ. If you have no brothers according to the flesh, look around. You have brothers in this room. They are here worshiping Christ with you. They were made your brothers through Jesus' death.

B. Sharers in a Heavenly Calling

But the Hebrew writer doesn't stop there. To be holy brethren is much. But there's more. We share in a heavenly calling. What is that calling? It is the call to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. It is the call to become not just in status, but in character and habits, a citizen of heaven.

Perhaps you have been to a naturalization ceremony and watched someone who was born in a foreign land take the oaths that make him an American. Perhaps you have been to an

adoption ceremony and seen the power of the state to constitute a new family, not one made by biology and blood but one made by covenant and law. Well, when you were baptized, you participated in an even more glorious ceremony. You were brought into a family by covenant and law, but a family that was made such by biology (flesh) and blood. You were brought into a commonwealth, the commonwealth of Israel. And to this day, you are under God's call to become more and more heavenly, more and more like Jesus Christ, the ruler of heaven. You have been called from heaven by God who is in heaven. And you have been called to heaven, to dwell there forever. This calling is not just mine, or yours. It is ours. It's a common calling. We are gathered here to worship Christ and see His heavenly glory because we want to be fitted for heaven. We are taking our heavenly calling seriously.

You've seen the shirts at the gym and on the sports field: "The will to win is nothing without the will to train." The will to go to heaven is nothing without the will to be transformed by the Spirit here on earth.

So who are you? You are someone in process. You have been invited to Heaven, but you're still getting ready to go. You have been called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, but you have not yet put on your wedding garment and sat down at the table. But though you are not yet there, you are already holy. You are already a Christian brother. The NT only calls us Christians twice. But it calls us brothers almost 200 times. That's an astonishing privilege. You were called to heaven with your brothers by the one whose heaven it is — and He bought the privilege of entering it for you through His death.

That's a brief look at who you are.

II. Who Jesus Is

But who is Jesus? After all, your identity as someone called to be, like Him, a resident of heaven, is only one piece of the puzzle. If you are called by Him to live with Him in His heaven, you might need to know what He's like. The Hebrew writer pulls out two descriptors of Christ that will help you think about Him.

A. God's Apostle

The first of these is really a cool way to describe Jesus because this is the only time in the Bible the word is applied to Him. That's right: The writer calls Jesus an apostle.

Now, wait. I thought Peter, Paul, John, and the rest were the apostles, and that Jesus sent the apostles. How, then, is He an apostle? The answer is that the twelve apostles are Jesus' apostles, but Jesus is His Father's apostle. The word "apostle" just means "sent one." That's why Paul speaks of Titus and the rest of Paul's ministry team as "the apostles of the churches" in 2 Cor. 8:23. There are different kinds of apostle, in other words. It all depends on who does the sending.

So who sent Jesus? His Father. God sent His Son into the world, that we might live through Him. That is the truth captured in this statement that Jesus is the apostle whom we confess. Grammatically, the word "apostle" is linked to the phrase "the coming one," an ancient Messianic title.

So why think about Jesus? Because He is God's sent one! He came from the Father, sent into the world to save us. Think about it. You are holy brothers, called to heaven — and this message was proclaimed only by and through Jesus Christ, apostle and high priest of our confession. Without His coming, without His teaching, you and I would never have heard that we could be holy brothers, that we could be partakers of a heavenly calling.

B. Your High Priest

But not only is Jesus God's apostle. He is also God's High Priest, and yours. He serves God; that's what a priest does. But the service He offers to God is service that takes away your sins and intercedes for you.

Have you ever felt that you really wanted someone to take your side? To help you? To care about you and your needs and take them with authority to the powers that be and convince them to assist you in your cause? Guess what, brothers and sisters: That's exactly what Jesus does. That is the job description of a High Priest. He does it primarily with respect to sin, but really with respect to every part of your relationship with God. You don't just have a lawyer on retainer in the heavenly court; you have the king's own Son appearing for you and pleading for you.

Why should you think about Jesus? Because He is your high priest! His work affects your life more than anyone else's.

III. What You Need to Do

So as a holy brother, a partaker of God's heavenly calling, what is your call with respect to Jesus, who is apostle and high priest?

A. Think About Him

Your first call is to think about Him. "Consider Jesus!" the author implores us. How can we do that?

First of all, make sure that you build time to think into your life. If you don't have time to think about anything, then you won't have time to think about Jesus. How much downtime do you have? How often do you allot a period without earbuds, without radio, without entertainment or social event or sleep calling your mind away from thinking and toward insensibility? You must give time to think if you are going to think about Jesus.

Second, make it part of your routine. We all know that we are supposed to read the Bible every day and pray every day. But do you routinely take time to think about, to digest, the truth about Jesus? It's fine to say "I never think about Legos" or "I never think about how the infrastructure of the city supports my daily activities." But to say "I never think about Jesus" is hardly the words of a Christian. If He is your Lord and Savior, make it part of your routine to consider Him. For most of us, this works most naturally into the time when we read and pray. Take a little time to think. Consider Jesus.

Who would want to raise their hand and say "Yes, that's me! I'm an unthinking Christian"? But on the other hand, it's hard to build time into the day to actually do what the writer commands you and me to do right here in Hebrews 3:1. All he asks is that we think about Jesus. Yes, in a major sense that's what church is for. I praise God that you are here and that you

are taking time every week like this to think about Jesus. Don't settle for anything less than that. But be sure that you are also taking time on your own to think about Jesus. You know who He is. Now think about Him.

B. Confess Him

The other thing you are called to do is what we just did by singing together, and what we will do again shortly by eating the Lord's Supper together. That, of course, is to confess Him. Jesus is the "apostle of our confession," that is, the one whom we openly proclaim and announce to be ours. We confess Him. We say "This is my Jesus." Take the time to confess Him, brothers and sisters. He is yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Think about that. Think about Jesus; give Him some thought. Then open your mouth and say "He is God's apostle, sent to earth to save me. He is my High Priest, and He intercedes for me at His Father's right hand."

Consider Jesus. He considers you. Amen.