

Learn!

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[0 : 0 0] Now like us in the sermon today to look back at Hebrews chapter 5, chapter 4 and chapter 5, the section that we read together on page 1203. And if I was to give this another title other than the one that is given I think in the bulletin, it would be that this is about Jesus as the great bridge builder.

Jesus as the great bridge builder is entitled, the section is entitled, Jesus the great high priest and it speaks about him being a great high priest who has gone through the heavens. Now I don't know about you, what you think, but I think because of the culture we live in and the connotations that somehow have been added to this title, it's taken on kind of weird cultic connotations, the idea of a high priest. You know there's kind of cultic weird things connected with that terminology, isn't it you? There's high priests of evil and high priests of this and high priests of that and it seems to have been taken out of its context, out of its biblical context and maybe when we hear the whole idea of a high priest and unless we know our Old Testament and unless we know what the Bible teaches about that, it can seem to be quite a weird term that's been hijacked as it were by a lot of cults and different organizations today. But really the whole idea is that he is a bridge builder, he's a representative for us before God. It's interesting in Latin the word priest that's used here is translated pontifex which is an interesting word because it means a builder of bridges and that's where the Catholic Church would get the use of the holy pontif for the Pope and the word pontificate would come from that which is a shame really because pontificate has again negative connotations isn't it? If you pontificate about something you're kind of you're preaching down your nose at somebody or you're being very dogmatic about things in a maybe a very insensitive way and well maybe there's reason for that of course but it's again it's not true to the meaning of the word which is a bridge builder and that's what I've chosen to use for the picture of Jesus today because Jesus in this chapter as throughout the whole of this book is being presented as the unique Savior, the great Savior, the only Savior and I'm calling him here the great bridge builder, the bridge builder that we need spiritually to enable us to know God to understand God to be forgiven to know forgiveness for eternal life and to know hope in a future and again the writer here just keeps on building on the character of Jesus and the importance of Jesus and the significance of Jesus for us in our lives. Jesus is the bridge builder that we need and we can see that in several ways we can see it firstly in the name that he's given here he's called Jesus and you know titles in the Bible are very important again they're not so important to us today but very important in the Bible and the names are significant here he's called Jesus the Son of God and so that reminds us of why he is a bridge builder extraordinary for us why he's good for us to help us to reach God because there's a great gap between ourselves and God because of our sin and he's the bridge builder between ourselves and God and we'll go on to see a little bit more about that he's Jesus the Son of Mary Jesus the name given to him as a human being he becomes flesh we saw that last week or the week before he's one of us he becomes one of us in order to redeem us in order to save us he's not an angel he's not a seraph he's not a spirit he's one of us and that's why he can represent us before God because he takes on human flesh in a couple of weeks I'm going out to America to see Scott and Joe and I'm going out particularly because it's Scott's final year playing soccer out there and he's got his last game and it's called the seniors game and the seniors game he gets you know they get presented to all the other teams and you know it's a special day for the seniors and someone also from their family usually goes there as well if they can to kind of represent the family and so I'm going because I can represent him and I'm his dad and he's got my blood and I share in that role of being a representative to him or if I go out there and I speak and they'll know I'm Scottish and I can represent the Scottish people because of who I am because of where I've been born and because of how I've been brought up and it's like being an ambassador you can do

something because you know the blood runs through your veins or because there's a legitimate way in which you can represent your people or your family or whatever it is and here God Jesus Christ can represent us because he becomes Jesus the son of Mary he becomes human being he becomes flesh and blood family but not only is he the one who is representing us in that way as Jesus the son of Mary but he's also were told here Jesus he's the son of God and it's a bit like that helps us to understand why he's a perfect representative before us before God because he becomes flesh but also he is God and you know when you think of a bridge builder well at least in some instances a bridge builder it links to sides of a chasm but there's also a kind of drawbridge which opens up a castle for example to the people outside but it comes from the castle and it goes down so that people can cross it and it's a little bit like that that he is the bridge comes from God and it's let down so that we can come through because we need that great divine answer because the chasm between us and God is like this deep deep hole is dark and black that is death itself and we can't cross that into God's presence because of God's judgment on us because of our sinfulness and our rebellion against him in our lives it's far too great for us to build that bridge back to God we can't just come to God and say I'm trying my best I'm trying my hardest is that enough for me to be right with you is that enough to me for me to be in relationship with you he says that isn't the case our only hope back to God is by coming to God through Jesus Christ and what he has done as that bridge builder which will go on to see a little bit more about he is intervened on our behalf

God has provided the solution for us God has provided the intervention and because of that Jesus is a great high priest he's not a good high priest he's not a not bad high priest he's not a half decent high priest he's an excellent great high priest he's a great bridge builder he's the only bridge builder between ourselves and God there's no way back to God there's no way to forgiveness there's no way to eternal life without coming through Jesus Christ that's the whole point of why Jesus is coming why we worship him and why we want to know more about him he's the bridge builder we need because of the title here that we see explains about him but also in a more practical way for us he's a great bridge builder for us as believers need to know about Jesus we need to know more about him as we go on he's a great high priest because he knows what it's like to be us he knows what it's like he's a good representative because he knows what it's like to be us we said a little bit about that last week but we see it in two ways we see it in the fact that he was sympathetic to us in verse 15 if you look at that it tells us that we do not have a high priest who's unable to sympathize with us in our weakness but one who's been tempted in every way yet without sin so he knows what it's like to be us in two ways well in at least two ways probably a lot more but only two in this chapter the first is in temptation now who of us don't know about temptation temptation to do wrong sometimes temptation to wrong on our own level and our own standard sometimes temptation to wrong according to God's word and God's standard but he knows what it was like to face temptation we're told that in the passage that we read together because Jesus took a human body that was subject to weakness and temptation or testing he didn't take a glorified body didn't take a body that somehow was amazingly divine and was free from all these things he took a body that was prone to temptation he knew pain he knew suffering he knew sleep deprivation he knew the need for food the need for nourishment and you would know frustration he knew struggles he knew the limitations of what it was like to live in a fallen world and he was tested he was tempted tempted to sin he was tempted in many ways we don't understand and know about but we do know one or two of things he was telling you know he was tempted to look after number one when he was tempted of Satan in the desert he was tempted just to say look forget about what you've come to do just look after yourself these guys aren't worth it he was attempted to abuse his miraculous powers you're hungry just let that bread that stones turn into bread you can do it tempted about popularity tempted to have a life of ease tempted to reject his disciples because they were so slow to understand tempted to bring judgment on people because they rejected him tempted to apostasy in the Garden of Gethsemane tempted just to abandon what he had come to do and rebel against his God million other ways in which he was tempted to not be our redeemer that are not recorded yet he resisted that temptation he chose to obey his father who had come to serve and he chose to make the decisions that were graceful he was able not to sin tempted as we are yet without sin unlike us who are tempted and who cannot choose naturally cannot choose not to give into temptation we can outwardly do that but we can never do it in a way that will please God because our motives will never be to glorify God unless we have come to know Jesus Christ as our

[11:19] Lord and Savior but he is one who understands temptation so he's gentle like the good high priest that spoken about in verse 2 gentle with us when we're ignorant when we're wandering away from him he says well he understands he's gentle with us and that's a great challenge to our understanding of this holy God that we worship today he is gentle and he is sympathetic and he's understanding and he knows what we're going through and that's a great challenge to our understanding of God in prayer but it's also a great challenge to the way we respond as Christians to others our response as those who are to be Christ like Christians to other people that we also are to respond with sympathetic listening with a care and a gentleness and softness that's strong but is also recognizing our own weakness so he is a really great high priest because he sympathizes with us in temptation but also he sympathizes with us in suffering in verses 8 and 9 we have that although he was a son he learned obedience from what he suffered and once made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and he was so undesigned by God to be a high priest the order of milk is a debt that is that Jesus in his life and in his lifetime became was made perfect it's not that he was imperfect but he was made suitable in other words to be our Savior in other words whenever he was faced with temptation or with suffering he responded in the way that perfectly made him a suitable Savior because when we're tempted we fail when we suffer we respond in the wrong way and we often fall into sin but Jesus as our representative in temptation and in suffering responded perfectly he didn't sin and thought word or indeed and so he becomes the one who then goes on to be a redeemer he suffered in his life perfectly submitting himself to the

Father's will all the time in ways that we can never do in order to be a perfect substitute in our place no more so than in Gethsemane where we read that he sweated drops of blood his capillaries burst on the inside of his forehead because of the intensity of the strain and the pressure of what he was going to do and it was as if you sweating drops of blood we're told in verse 70 during his life Jesus on earth he offered up prayers and petition with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death he was heard because of his reverent submit reverent submission he was Jesus going to the cross and it wasn't just like he was going to dying across there's lots of guys lots of women lots of men have died nobly and died without fear and died courageously on across or in any other way martyrs but Jesus was recognizing in his suffering something far greater than the physical death of Calvary he was recognizing that there was a spiritual price being paid on the cross where he was facing a second death that is death separation from God his father who he lived in eternal relationship of love with eternal and he sensed his father's pain and he sensed his own terror that but in doing and facing the second death and facing the separation from the father and the judgment of our sin and taking our sin upon him he was he was he was doing what nobody else could do he was paying the price for our sins because we couldn't do that I really wish I could make that more clear I feel that I'm struggling with the words and I long the Spirit will come and take that and make that absolutely clear to you that on the cross Jesus did for you and for me what we cannot do for ourselves he took the guilt of our sin and he took the punishment the justice and the right punishment against us and he took it upon himself because his father recognized that was the only way and that the cost was immense and he substituted at that point where he was tempted to say well why would I do that with the tears and with the blood and with the sweat and with everything he says I'll do it I will do it I will do the father's will he submitted as we're told here submit he learned obedience from what he suffered and was made perfect became the source of salvation because he went and faced the punishment and the separation and the guilt for our sins on him so our substitute is a great high priest he does it in our place he's Jesus and he's God and he does it in our place he emptied himself of all his divine rights and as he went on the cross into death he let go entirely let go of being God as it were and entrusted himself to the father who would raise him from the dead and to would vindicate him as Redeemer and sin bearer absolute perfection but we need a miracle of God to accept that and to see it and to understand it please pray about that and he's he's a perfect bridge builder because he's Jesus and of God because he's sympathetic but also and this other level is because God is also the architect of the salvation it is to God that we need to be reconciled we need to be made friends again because our sins separates us and it's God who provides the answer but not kind of from a distant far away disinterested unconcerned way it's from a loving involvement huge involvement in us we're told separately every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God appointed by God no one takes this honor upon himself he must be called

by God and the verse 10 and once made perfect he was designated by God to be a high priest so God's hugely involved because God's the architect God's the bridge building architect here as it were it's not something that is human it's not something that's man-made it's not something it just has developed over the centuries God is the architect and therefore it's got to be perfect because if it's not perfect and if it's not from God then it's worthless and we've got a full congregation here today listening to the gospel being spoken from Hebrews 5 and it's just a waste of time God the father as is the architect of the salvation because he knows exactly what we need and he knows our hearts and he knows what we're like and he knows a rebellion against him and he knows we might be as good as the next person as we look around us but before him he sees our need and he sees that we're separated we don't love him as we should we don't love one another as we should and we are eternally lost unless we come to Jesus Christ God the father chooses the Son God appoints him to represent us God designates him God seals him God justifies us through him in all that he has done if any of you have been in

Edinburgh for any length of time you'll be beginning to rejoice that some of the roadworks are actually going away and that we're neat the trams are nearly finished they're almost done all the wires are up they're nearly done and probably in the next few months barring an earthquake or something the trams will start running they'll be being tested in the next few months up and down nobody'll be on them apart from council workers but they'll be being tested up and down the road and then eventually they'll be given a completion certificate and we can ride on the privilege of being Edinburgh citizens for about 20 pounds a go to ride on the trams if we ever want to go to the airport if we want to go anywhere else I don't know what will happen but that's what we've paid 17 billion pounds for but they will be given a completion certificate and it's as if Jesus Christ is just if God in sending Jesus and in then seeing Jesus learning obedience to be our Savior and then dying on the cross for our sins and then being in the grave for the on until the third day

Jesus God the Father raises him from the dead to the throne of grace and it's like that's the completion certificate it says absolutely I absolutely accept what Jesus has done on behalf of the people who needed a redeemer and he is enthroned and he is victorious and we've sung about that today death is defeated because God has defeated the power of death in raising Jesus from the dead and for everyone who trusts in Jesus death is defeated and we will go on and live with him forever more because of what he has done is a great victory that we believe in and he's we're told he's made a priest in the order of Melchizedek I'm not going to speak about that today because there's a lot more about that in chapter 7 I'll come back to that when we do so but Christ is in the heavens and he's in the heavens as we're told as we read at the beginning of that section we are gate pipes high priest who has gone through the heavens for us so he's in heaven we go to be with him in heaven but we have eternal life with him now through what he has done if we take him as our Lord and Savior and recognize him as such so very quickly how do we respond to truths like this about Jesus being the high priest and remember this was written to Jewish Christians who knew all about the high priestly structure of the Old Testament and how the high priest represented the people before God but also needed to get forgiveness for his own sins because he was a sinner and they knew that I had high priest was pointing forward to Redeemer so they applied that truth to their lives Jesus being the great representative what about ourselves what's our response well can I ask you I'm gonna speak to two particular groups of people very quickly first is if you're here today and you're not a

[22 : 09] Christian I would invite you to do so I'm gonna use culinary culinary illustrations okay to do with food for if you're not a Christian I'm gonna invite you to taste and see that God is good Sam 34 speaks about that taste and see that God is good in other words you'll go to Jesus Christ yourself in prayer that's how we speak with him it's a spiritual relationship so even though you may struggle with that concept of praying because you're not sure if God exists or Jesus exists can I ask you nonetheless to do that to do what you think is maybe crazy or unwise or you hope no one else sees you doing it can I ask you to do that ask him to show you himself ask him to show you your own heart as he sees it and your own need as he sees it and ask you to ask him to help you understand the gospel message and his love for you I would love to do that but I can't we need God's help to do that and ask you to do the impossible which is to ask him for the gift of faith to believe to wrestle with that to struggle with it to think about it because if it's true

God is your maker and God knows your thoughts and the attitudes of your hearts and knows all about you and knows your needs and has declared clearly your your need for redemption your

lostness the fact that you're dying physically which only speaks of a spiritual death and separation which is much more solemn and eternal she's will you come to me I'm the great high priest I'm the answer I'm the bridge builder that you need God says that if God is God then it's worth considering that isn't it if God is God if he's not God if he's just someone we've just got in our back pockets just to keep us pull them out every so often like a kind of lucky charm then let's forget let's forget the whole thing but can I ask you to do that and if you're a Christian I'm going to continue rather crude and crass illustration but it's about it's like eating a spiritual salad because here we're told a couple of times let us let us let us hold firm let us pray with confidence and there's several other references to lettuce in Romans in Hebrews which is reminding us of what we need to do because of what Jesus done let us do this because of what Jesus and let us do the next thing and so we respond in that way and so as Christians because he's a great high priest because he's the great bridge builder because he's sympathetic because he loves us because he suffered on our behalf because his father has raised him from the dead and declared them as righteous and victorious he says at the beginning of that section that we led it we read in verse 40 and 50 14 let us hold firm to the faith we profess so that's what I'm calling I'm calling myself to do and all of you to do as Christians those of you who are Christians here today let us hold firm the faith that we present profess the tendency for us is to loose loosen the grip on our faith is to give up is to wander is to go away that's what was struck that's why this book was written it was written to the Hebrew Jews who were Christians who had become

Christians but were tempted to go back into ritual Jewish thinking and underestimate who Jesus is let us hold firm to the faith we profess especially can I say in suffering when we're struggling because a lot of people are doing fine as Christians and I think everything's going well in Jesus can I divine Santa Claus will give them all they want and then things go wrong and they say oh well Jesus doesn't love me anymore because of my father if he's like a father and my father would not let these things happen to me and he wouldn't let me suffer but he's God who's got any said from day one that we will also suffer because we still remain and live in this broken and dysfunctional world and he will use that suffering as he did to become the perfect submissive child of God he will help us likewise suffering will often be used to teach us patience or to teach us grace or to expose pride or a greed or a selfishness that he wants to root out of us let us hold for me says it will happen let Christ mold us when we're suffering and struggling we will learn grace through it and learn trust through and forgiveness and patience and submission to the father's will don't flow don't drift hold on hold on he says that's the picture hold on to the faith we profess that's a real active verb that's being used there you've made a profession you know talks about a profession you've made a profession of being Christians of trusting in Jesus as your Lord and

Savior and before the church sometimes before the elders and before your friends that they know that don't let go of that there's no other bridge there there's no other way back to God and he's provided that and it's full and it's free and it's it's because he loves us and we don't need to do anything but simply accept it he's a great high priest the theme of this book is Jesus is worth worshiping and worth following and worth serving and worth believing in and worth dying for that's what it's saying it's strong it's loving it's compassionate it's gracious but it's also tough and it's saying that Jesus is worth it let us therefore hold firm and also let us in verse 16 let us also pray with confidence you know he talks about being sympathetic to us and therefore we approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in a time of need absolutely core that we are in this relationship and this communion with God and we have this lovely kind of mixture we go to a throne kingly worshipful we get on our knees before a throne but it's a throne of grace he is a victorious king priest we'll see a bit more about that with Melchizedek when we look at him in detail because Melchizedek in the Old Testament was different from all the other Old Testament priests he was a king priest and Jesus is from that order he's a king priest he's a he has a throne but it's a throne of grace in other words we have the power when we pray with confidence we know that he is the power to answer our prayers as he sees fit but it's a throne of grace a throne of sympathetic understanding gentle love he says I know you struggle I know you're weak I know it's difficult especially in suffering and I will respond to you accordingly and so we pray with confidence because we know the Christ into whose company we're coming you know if you've got something really important to ask someone the way you ask them will all be based on the kind of response you think you're going to get from them if they're going to blast you for asking maybe it's a boss at work or something and if you need for a half day off you need a half day off for something important and they're kind of ratcheting and grumpy and they fly off the handle quickly

you're gonna kind of go and ask them yeah it's gonna be difficult you're not gonna have a lot of confidence but if you know that your boss is someone who is understanding and who is reasonable and to well you know kind of make an arrangement for that to happen you will go you'll not abuse that but you will go confidently into his company or her company to ask for that time off because we know the response we'll get and that's the same in family and it's the same in relationships and it ought to be the same with us with God you know the reception you're gonna get when you go into God's presence and speak to Christ on this throne of grace because he's forgiven you he's redeemed you he's gone all the way to the cross he is sweat and drops of blood because of the pain and the suffering that he was going on in your place he went to hell in your place he can't express his love any more for you than that so you have confidence as you go into his presence you'll not always give us what we want we have confidence that he'll give you what you need and your confidence he'll never let you go and you've confidence that he can't love you any more than he does and you've confidence that his way is the best way even though we simply can't see that and we're fighting with them and saying give us a different way I want a different way don't go into his

presence with a false piety that sometimes we have as if we're kind of worthless or with a disrespectful fear or with unbelief or with cynicism go into his presence with a holy boldness expecting answers that will be good for us and that will include our submission and our obedience and our patience and his commitment to change us to be like himself which is why he doesn't always give us what we want he wants to give us what we need to transform us so that we're becoming more and more like him as we saw him in this passage he is the great bridge builder and as Christians prayer is our lifeblood if we're not praying we just have lost everything let's pray with confidence and pray with boldness and pray all the time before this throne of grace I mean let's bow our heads briefly in prayer heavenly Father we pray that you would take your words that it would not return to you without accomplishing what you want it to accomplish in our lives that we would be challenged by you and by the picture that you give of yourself here as the great bridge builder the great representative of us before you before God the Father and help us to understand all the mystery of that and all the mind-blowing grace of that and help us to come to terms with the fact that we have no part to play in our salvation at that level that he justifies us he forgives us he redeems us he buys us back he welcomes us into his family he adopts us he gives it inheritance all these biblical pictures thank you for that but out of gratitude help us to love and serve you and follow you and cross that bridge into relationship with you and deal with the sin that separates us from you help us to do that as

[33 : 41] Christians and may any here today who aren't Christians may they have the courage and the boldness and the strength of character to find a place of privacy and quiet and pray to you and just with simple words ask that you would make yourself clear to them we pray for that and we know we need God for that so help us and bless us in our continued fellowship and worship and as we sing together may we know God's presence and God's nearness and God's grace for Jesus' sake Amen