

Sermon Notes for December 8, 2002

“What Should Be A Christian’s Attitude Toward Those Who Struggle?” Hebrews 5:1-10

- a. **The Perfect Pastor has been found.** He preaches exactly twenty minutes and then sits down. He condemns sin, but never steps on anybody’s toes. He works from eight in the morning until ten at night, doing everything from preaching sermons to sweeping. He makes \$400 per week, gives \$200 a week to the church, buys lots of books, wears fine clothes, and has a nice family. He is thirty-six years old, and has been preaching forty years. He is tall on the short side, heavyset in a thin sort of way, and handsome. He wears his hair parted in the middle, left side dark and straight, right side brown and wavy. He has a burning desire to work with the youth and spends all his time with the senior citizens. He smiles all the time while keeping a straight face, because he has a keen sense of humor that finds him seriously dedicated. He makes fifteen calls a day on church members, spends all his time evangelizing non-members, and is always found in his study if he is needed. Unfortunately he burnt himself out and died at the age of thirty-seven.
- b. When a Pastor asked his congregation to list the task and hours he should spend in a week of ministry, the results showed that they wanted him to work **200 hours!**

Introduction

A. Let’s BE PROTESTANT!

1. It seems at times as if we Protestants haven’t realized that there was a Protestant Reformation led by Martin Luther in 1517.
 - a. Because one of the major tenants of the Reformation was the **Priesthood Of All Believers.**
 - b. In some ways the Protestant church still is “acting like Catholics” in its view of the minister:
 1. Assuming that the Minister is the consummate Christian, more spiritual and more effective than anyone else in the church.
 2. Assuming that if there is anything wrong in someone’s life that the Minister is the only one who can really handle the problem.
 3. Making the distinction between clergy and laity even greater by giving Ministers titles like:
 - a. Reverend
 - b. Doctor
2. Let me remind you that the term Priesthood Of All Believers is very BIBLICAL.
 - a. Notice **I Peter 2:9** – “But you are a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”
 - b. **Ephesians 4:11-12** says the same thing when it says that the “**saints**” are to actually “**do the ministry**” - not the minister or Pastor-teacher.

B. Let's Be BIBLICAL!

1. If the Scripture teaches that we are all Priests, then what "kind of Priests" are we to be?
2. Believe it or not, we are to pattern ourselves after the Priests of the Old Testament and especially the Great High Priest – Jesus.
3. And I believe that it will surprise you as to what "kind" of Priests they were.
4. I do like this quote – **A.J. Gossip** – **"We are forever involved in the dust and the heat of the day; we have to spend our time getting and spending; we have to serve at the counter, to toil at the desk, to make the wheels of industry go round. We want you to be set apart so that you can go in to the secret place of God and come back every Sunday with a word from him to us."**

I. The Humanity Of The HIGH PRIEST.

A. The High Priest Had To Be A MAN.

1. He must be a **human**.
 - 5:1 "Every high priest is **selected from among men** and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins."
 - a. Notice that the Scriptures say that the High Priest is selected from among men!
 - b. To be a man suggests **SEVERAL THINGS**.
 1. **HE IS AS MUCH A SINNER AS ANY OTHER MAN.**
 - a. It absolutely drives me nuts when people put me or any other preacher on a pedestal.
 - b. It also drives me nuts when people are surprised that I struggle with life **JUST LIKE THEY DO!**
 1. In my discipleship of men, most men seem to think that they are meeting with a man who has it all together, because I am a Pastor.
 2. However, when I begin to share some of my struggles, their eyes open wide, as if to say, "You struggle too!"
 3. Christian author and preacher Stephen Brown said a woman in his church came up to him and said, **"We've always had preachers in the past who told us that they sinned, but you're the first one we've ever believed!"**
 2. In fact, the word for man is the word **anthropos**(anthropology).
 - a. Genetically it includes all males and females.
 - b. This term distinguishes between humans and animals.
 - c. **Within this Biblical term there is the suggestion of weakness, by which man is led into a mistake or prompted to sin.**
 - d. When compared to God, **ALL MEN ARE SINNERS!**
- c. The Priest, Minister or person who thinks that he is spiritually above other people is simply deluded.
 1. If you are a human, you are a sinner who struggles with sin – **NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE.**

2. If you DON'T think that you are a sinner, you struggle with:
- a. a lack of Biblical knowledge
 - b. and the sins of pride and lying
 - c. NOTICE:
 1. **I John 1:8 – “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”**
 2. **Romans 3:10-12 - As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."**
 - d. **A large prosperous downtown church had three mission churches** under its care that it had started. **On the first Sunday of the New Year all the members of the mission churches came to the city church for a combined communion service.** In those mission churches, which were located in the slums of the city were some outstanding cases of conversions – thieves, burglars and so on – but all knelt side by side at the Communion rail. **On one such occasion the Pastor saw a former burglar kneeling beside a judge of the Supreme Court of England – the judge who had sent him to jail where he had served seven years.** After his release this burglar had been converted and become a Christian worker. Yet, as they knelt there, the judge and the former convict, neither one seemed to be aware of the other. After the service, the judge was walking home with the Pastor and said to the Pastor, **“Did you notice who was kneeling beside me at the communion rail this morning?”** The Pastor replied, **“Yes, but I didn't know that you noticed.”** The two walked along in silence for a few more moments, and then the judge said, **“What a miracle of grace.”** The Pastor nodded in agreement – **“Yes, what a marvelous miracle of grace.”** Then the judge said, **“But to whom do you refer?”** And the Pastor said, **“Why, to the conversion of that convict.”** The judge said, **“But I was not referring to him. I was thinking of myself.”** The Pastor, surprised, replied: **“You were thinking of yourself? I don't understand.”** **“Yes,”** the judge replied, **“it did not cost that burglar** much to get converted when he came out of jail. He had nothing but a history of crime behind him and when he saw Jesus as his Savior he knew there was salvation and hope and joy for him. And he knew how much he needed that help. **But look at me.** I was taught from earliest infancy to live as a **gentleman**; that my word was to be my **bond**; that I was to say my **prayers**, go to **church**, take **communion** and so on. I went through **Oxford**, took my **degree**, was called to the **bar** and eventually **became a judge.** **Pastor, nothing but the grace of God could have caused me to**

admit that I was a sinner on a level with that burglar. It took much more grace to forgive me for all my pride and self-deception, to get me to admit that I was no better in the eyes of God than that convict that I had sent to prison.”

2. He must have a **heart**.

a. His **attitude**

Vs. 2a – “He is able to **deal gently** with those who are ignorant and going astray.”

1. The **definition** of gentle.

a. The Greek word is **metriopathein**.

b. It has an interesting meaning.

1. to have compassion, to deal gently with others.
2. But look at this: **to be moderate with those who are in sin.**
3. “One who is not unduly disturbed by the errors, faults and sins of others, but bears them gently.”
4. The Greeks defined this word as the mean between two extremes – extravagant grief and utter indifference.
5. W.M. MacGregor defined it as “the mid-course between explosions of anger and lazy indulgency.”
6. Moderation between anger and apathy.

2. The **application** of gentle.

- a. It means the ability to bear with people without getting irritated.
- b. It means the ability not to lose one’s temper with people who are foolish but do the same thing over and over again.
- c. While you do not condone the act, you do not condemn the person.
- d. It is a **PRESENT ACTIVE INFINITIVE** – a continual way of life!
- e. Let me illustrate one who did **not** exhibit Biblical metriopathein – King David (II Samuel 12:1-4)
 1. King David in the Old Testament fell into adultery with Bathsheba.
 - a. Bathsheba got pregnant with their baby.
 - b. After repeated attempts to get her husband back from the battlefield to sleep with his wife, Bathsheba, Uriah refused because his men were on the battlefield away from their wives.
 - c. When nothing worked, David finally sent Uriah to the front where he was killed.

2. After Nathan the prophet heard of David's sin, he confronted him, but was gentle (metriopathein).
 - a. He told King David a story about a wealthy man who abused his power (II Samuel 12:1-4).
 - b. Samuel was gentle but confrontive at the same time.
3. Upon hearing this story, David reacted in a rage.
 - a. Demanding that the man should DIE for killing a lamb.
 - b. David DID NOT SHOW metriopathein.
3. A lack of gentleness shows a lack of godliness.
 - a. **Ciaphas** was the High Priest who also showed no gentleness to Jesus. He was unmerciful to Him.
 - b. The ability to show a "moderating gentleness" is a trait of a spirit-filled Christian.
 - c. One of the greatest compliments that someone can pay me is that I don't judge them, no matter what they are doing.
4. Jesus had the most open and all encompassing mind that this world has ever seen. His own inner conviction was so strong, so firm, so unswerving that He could afford to mingle with any group secure in the knowledge that he would not be contaminated. It is fear that makes us unwilling to listen to another's point of view, fear that our own ideas may be attacked. Jesus had no such fear, no such pettiness of viewpoint, no need to fence Himself off for His own protection. **He knew the difference between graciousness and compromise and we would do well to learn from Him. He set for us the most magnificent and glowing example of truth combined with mercy of all time and in departing said: "Go ye and do likewise." Billy Graham, Unto the Hills.**
5. **On Monday, August 19, 1993, a 31-year-old woman, Sopehia Mardress White, burst into the hospital nursery at USC Medical Center in Los Angeles, wielding a .38 caliber handgun. She had come gunning for Elizabeth Staten, a nurse whom she accused of stealing her husband. White fired six shots, hitting Staten in the wrist and stomach. Staten fled, and White chased her into the emergency room, firing once more.** There, with blood on her clothes and a hot pistol in her hand, the attacker was met by another nurse, **Joan Black**, who did the unthinkable. **Black walked calmly to the gun-toting woman – and hugged her.** Black spoke comforting words. The assailant said she didn't have anything to live for, that Staten had stolen her family. **"You're in pain," Black said. "I'm sorry, but everybody has pain in their life . . . I understand, and we can work it out."** As they talked, the hospital invader

kept her finger on the trigger. Once she began to lift the gun as though she would shoot herself. Nurse Black just pushed her arm down and continued to hold her. At last Sopehia White gave the gun to the nurse. She was disarmed by a hug, by understanding, by compassion. **Black later told an AP reporter, “I saw a sick person and had to take care of her.”**

b. His audience.

Vs. 2 – “He is able to deal gently with those who are **ignorant and are going astray**, since he himself is subject to weakness.”

1. The **struggles** of his audience.

a. **Ignorance.**

1. They don’t know any better.
2. This person is wrong and doesn’t even know that they are wrong.
3. The Greek word agnoeo – (the word agnostic) a person who doesn’t know if there is a God.
4. The tense is a Present Active Participle meaning that they are wrong and continuing to be wrong.
5. **WHY IN THE WORLD ARE CHRISTIANS SO JUDGEMENTAL, ESPECIALLY WITH THOSE WHO DON’T KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING?**
 - a. Non-believers
 - b. New Christians
6. Warren Wiersbe – “You would think that all sinners would have compassion for another sinner, but this is not always the case.” Sin can make a person selfish. Sin can blind us to the hearts of others. Sin can harden our hearts to make us judgmental instead of sympathetic.

b. **Going astray.**

1. This refers to those who have for a season left the path.
2. They had walked with the Lord and then left.
3. Notice the EXACT sense from **Galatians 6:1** – **“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”**
 - a. Although the word gentle is a different word,
 - b. we are called to deal with erring brothers with patience and humility.
2. The **similarities** with His audience.

a. **THE REASON that he is to be patient and merciful IS THAT HE IS ALSO A MAN AND IS PRONE TO WEAKNESS.**

b. **HOW DARE YOU THINK THAT YOU ARE ABOVE ANYONE!**

1. A true Priest should have a healthy view of his own sin nature and mortality.

2. **THAT IS WHY I WON'T LET YOU PUT ME ON A PEDESTAL!**

a. I don't belong there and neither does any other preacher.

b. In fact, you should distance yourself from any preacher or Christian who thinks that they belong there.

1. Look at what Paul the apostle said about himself: **I Timothy 1:15-16** – “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.** But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.”

2. Now, was Paul deluded, being humble, or simply being an honest Priest?

B. The High Priest Had To Be MANDATED.

Vs. 5:4 – “**No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God,** just as Aaron was.”

1. A Priest was not a position of establishing one's control.

a. No Priest simply decided that he was going to become a Priest.

b. It was to be a call of and from God.

c. No man should think that he is worthy or able to become a Priest.

2. A Priest was a position where you were called.

a. A man is **called**.

1. Verse 1 – “Every high priest is **selected** from among men.”

a. Greek - lambano

b. to take with the hand; lay hold of a person to use him.

c. to choose

d. A Present **PASSIVE** Participle

2. Verse 4 – “No one **takes** this honor upon himself.”

a. Greek - lambano

b. Present **ACTIVE** Indicative

3. Verse 4 – he must be called by God.

a. Greek word kaleo – called

b. to call by name; to invite; to be called to bear a name or a title.

- c. Once again, a Present **PASSIVE** Participle – God does the calling.
- b. A man must be **ABSOLUTELY** called.
 - Vs. 4a – “**NO** man takes this honor upon himself.”
 - 1. The word **NO** is an absolute negative –
 - 2. In other words, **NO MAN** would simply decide to become a Priest.
 - 3. That’s exactly how I felt when God called me – I thought - you have got to be kidding!
 - 4. And that is what I tell everyone who “thinks” that they are being called to the ministry. “It will go away.”
 - 5. William Barclay – “**The ministry of God among men is neither a job nor a career but a calling. A man ought to be able to look back and say not, I chose this work, but rather, God chose me and gave me this word to do.**”

II. The Humanity Of The GREAT HIGH PRIEST.

A. The Great High Priest Had To Be A MAN.

5:7-8 – “**During the days of Jesus' life on earth**, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.”

- 1. In order to be “our” Great High Priest, **Jesus had to become a man.**
 - a. Not only would He then be able to die in our place,
 - c. But He would be able to more identify with our own humanity.
- 2. Notice what struggles Jesus endured “as a man.” Vs.7 – “During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up **prayers** and **petitions** with **loud cries** and **tears** to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.”
 - a. **Prayer**
 - 1. Because Jesus had never known sin, He went to His heavenly Father begging Him during His struggle with temptation.
 - 2. His struggle was so great in the Garden of Gethsemane that He sweat drops of blood.
 - 3. **R.C.H. Lenski** – “**These are not prayers such as we read of at other times but literal beggings as well as pitiful pleadings of the man Christ Jesus in His utter dependence on God.**”
 - b. **Petitions**
 - 1. From begging, Jesus went to supplication.
 - 2. The word used here is the picture of an olive branch bound with wool asking , pleading and begging His Heavenly Father for relief.
 - c. **Loud cries**
 - 1. This is a cry which a man does not choose to utter but is brought forth in the stress of some tremendous tension or searing pain.

2. The word loud refers to mighty, violent, forcibly uttered tears.
3. This is the kind of crying that does not bring relief.

d. **Tears**

1. The last stage in an extreme time of grief.
 2. Tears that bring closure and relief.
3. Like the High Priest, who was a man and who struggled in this life, these verses also show that the human side of Jesus struggled **JUST LIKE WE DO**.

B. The Great High Priest Had To Be A MEDIATOR.

5:7-10 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his **reverent submission**. 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 was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

1. On this earth Jesus **“was heard because of His reverent submission.”**
 - a. In heaven, Jesus did not know what it **“felt like”** to be human, because He had never been human.
 1. He did not know the limitations of the flesh.
 2. He did not know the temptation that humans struggle with.
 - b. By His **“reverent submission,”** He came from heaven to this earth and submitted to being made in the flesh so that He could be **“taught”** about our struggle.
2. And Jesus **“learned”** about our limitations through His sufferings.
 - a. Ray Steadman – **“The author implies that Jesus faced the emotional misery which sin produces; its shame, guilt and despair. He felt the iron-band of sins enslaving power. He was oppressed by a sense of hopelessness, total discouragement and utter defeat.”**
 - b. And once He had totally experienced this, **“once made perfect,”** He became totally able to be our mediator.
 1. Not just to be a lawyer who had presented our case of stealing, but one who had become a lawyer after serving 5-7 years in jail as a thief.
 2. **Bob Russell, minister of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY tells about a short-term mission trip he took to Kenya.** They were back in the bush country, three hours away from a hospital, three hours from electricity, six hours from a golf course. **About as remote as you could get.** The lead missionary kept them in his house, but he had singled out a night when Bob would **sleep in one of the Masia hut**, which Bob hated. **They are made out of dried manure.** They are dark and dingy. **And they kept their lambs and calves and goats inside the huts, so the smell was terrible. The beds were made out of twigs, covered with sheepskin. They would sleep three or four in a bed, maybe eight people in a one-room hut. The missionaries would say, “Now whenever you stay in one of those huts, you be sure to put**

your socks on the outside of your pants because the cockroaches will try to crawl up your legs. At night you can shine a flashlight and see bugs all over the ceiling. Bob was not looking forward to spending a night in one of those huts. But the day before his assigned night in the hut, the missionary got sick and the plans changed so he did not have to stay in the hut.

C. The Great High Priest Had To Be MANDATED.

5:5-6 **So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a High Priest.** But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." And he says in another place, "You are a Priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

1. Just who the High Priest, **Jesus did not call Himself to be our High Priest.**
 - a. He was obedient to the call of His heavenly Father.
 - b. Which makes His response that much more glorious.
 1. The Heavenly Father came to His Son to call Him to go.
 2. Jesus had to leave all of heaven's glory to come to this earth.
2. Called to become our Great High Priest.

Conclusion:

1. God **mandates** that each Christian become a Priest.
 - a. **I Peter 2:9** "But you are a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."
 - b. It is NOT something that we decided to do. No, God called us to Himself.
 - c. WHO IS WORTHY to become a Priest?
 1. I am not.
 2. You are not.
2. God calls us to be **mediators**.
 - a. Thus, our calling is to be that spiritual connection between God and man.
 1. between God and Christians.
 2. between God and non-Christians
 - b. Pastors cannot do it all. Let's quit being practicing Catholics. We are Protestants who believe in the priesthood of all believers.
 - c. We ARE ALL PRIESTS RESPONSIBLE to link God to men.
 - d. And we are called to be gentle as mediators, NO MATTER WHAT OTHERS DO.
3. God calls us who are **men**.
 - a. And yet, God calls us to be priests who are also sinners.
 - b. Mead, defiled, confused, fleshly, insecure, misdirected sinners.
 - c. But God called me when He called Priests and He called a man when He called the Great High Priest. It is not only o.k. to be a human Priest, it is required.

Bob Weber, past president of Kiwanis International, told this story. He had spoken to a club in a small town and was spending the night with a farmer on the outskirts of the community. He had just relaxed on the front porch when a newsboy delivered the evening paper. The boy noted the sign Puppies for Sale. The boy got off his bike and said to the farmer, **“How much do you want for the pups, mister?” “Twenty-five dollars, son.”** The boy’s face dropped. “Well, sir, could I at least see them anyway?” The farmer whistled, and in a moment the mother dog came bounding around the corner of the house tagged by four of the cute puppies, wagging their tails and yipping happily. At last, another pup came straggling around the house, dragging one hind leg. **“What’s the matter with that puppy, mister?”** the boy asked. “Well, Son, that puppy is crippled. We took her to the vet and the doctor took an X ray. **The pup doesn’t have a hip joint and that leg will never be right.**” To the amazement of both men, the boy dropped the bike, reached for his collection bag and took out a fifty-cent piece. “Please, mister,” the boy pleaded. **“I want to buy that pup. I’ll pay you fifty cents every week until the twenty-five dollars is paid. Honest, I will, mister.”** The farmer replied, **“But, Son, you don’t seem to understand. That pup will never, never be able to run or jump. That pup is going to be a cripple forever.** Why in the world would you want such a useless pup as that?” The boy paused for a moment, then reached down and pulled up his pant leg, exposing that all too familiar iron brace and leather knee-strap holding a poor twisted leg. The boy answered, **“Mister, that pup is going to need someone who understands him to help him in life!”**

1. What is the typical church member’s view of the Pastor? What do they think that the Pastor should be doing each day?

2. How does this compare with the view of the Reformation, the Priesthood of All Believers?

3. Do you actually see yourself as a Priest? If not, why not?
If so, how should you view yourself?

4. How should a High Priest deal with those under his care?
(See Heb. 5:2 – look at the word gentle.)

