

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹ **Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.** ¹² **He says,**

**“I will declare your name to my brothers;
in the presence of the congregation I will sing your
praises.”**

¹³ **And again,**

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again he says,

“Here am I, and the children God has given me.”

¹⁴ **Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—** ¹⁵ **and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.** ¹⁶ **For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants.** ¹⁷ **For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.** ¹⁸ **Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.** (NIV84)

Theme: Jesus—our Brother from Heaven.

1. He came to be like us.
2. He came to free us.

Siblings share a special bond with each other. It doesn’t matter how old they are they still share the bond of childhood—growing up in the same house, with the same parents, under the same rules. Even if they grow apart over the years there is still some sort of connection. I have three brothers, including a twin brother. I just saw him for a few days in Ohio. Even though all of us live in different parts of the country we still try to get together at least once a year. And we are all still very

close. This is something I’m sure is not unique to my family. Most brothers and sisters share special bond with each other. As great as that bond is between siblings we have a greater bond with a greater brother—Jesus. He is our brother who has come down from heaven. He came to be like us and he came to free us.

We have spent considerable time the last few services proclaiming the deity of Jesus. This is a topic we cover again and again in Bible classes, confirmation classes and so on. Jesus is God. We spend so much time on this because there are some who deny that Jesus is God. But there aren’t too many that deny that Jesus is a human. So it might be a little easy to forget this important truth. But Jesus’ humanity is just as important to our eternal life as his deity. After all, that is why Jesus became a man—it was to save us. As the Writer to the Hebrews says in verse 14, **Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity.** Jesus had a human parent—the virgin Mary. He has a human body. He has a human soul. Jesus lived his life like any other human would have. He was conceived and born. He had to be raised by his parents who fed and changed him. They taught him how to read, write, walk, and talk. Numerous times the Bible mentions Jesus eating. He got tired and slept. He was thirsty and drank. He had normal human emotions. He cried at the grave of Lazarus. On Easter when Jesus rose from the dead the disciples thought they had seen a ghost. Jesus responded, **Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have didn’t flesh and bones, as you see I have.**

Jesus—true God from heaven took on flesh. He became like us in every aspect. Expect one. Jesus didn’t have sin. We were born into sin. From the time we were conceived by our sinful parents we were nothing but sinners. Born as enemies of God. But Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He is God; he never was the enemy of God. He is perfect. And without sin. Jesus was without sin so that he could save those who were sinners. In order to save us Jesus had to keep the law perfectly—thus subjecting himself to his own laws. We see some perfect examples of this in our gospel for today. Just think of what that boy Jesus was doing in the temple. He was learning God’s word. The all-knowing eternal God

had to learn his own Word! And we are told that God—this **Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.** And when Mary and Joseph told Jesus to come home with them, he did. He obeyed those he created; he honored those who he ruled over. These are the depths that Jesus became like us—fully human.

Through Christ's perfect obedience we are saved. And so we are made holy by Christ. And as we read in verse 11, **Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.** By the work of Christ not only are we made holy, but we are also part of God's family. It is through faith that we are part of God's family. We were all welcomed into this family through the waters of baptism. We were born as children of the devil. We belonged to him. We wanted nothing to do with God or his Son. We were children of wrath on our way to live with the devil forever. Yet now, we have become adopted children of God. He even considers us his brothers.

And like brothers on this earth, we share a special bond with Christ. He became like us. He had to in order to save us. He had to become human so he could be under the law and keep it perfectly in our place. He had to be a man so that he could serve as our substitute. He shared humanity with us, so he could share his holiness with us.

The Writer to the Hebrews continues this thought in verse 17, **For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.** Our brother from heaven came not only to be like us, but he came to free us.

We were born into sin. By nature we could do nothing but sin. And still now we sin against God every day. We constantly fail to obey him. And our sins deserve punishment. That punishment is death. As Paul says in Romans, **the wages of sin is death.** We will all die because we are all sinners. But sin doesn't just result in physical death—but eternal death. We deserve to suffer with the devil for eternity because of our sins.

And so we fear death. It's human nature to be afraid of death. We don't want to suffer forever. Plus we don't know exactly what death

will bring. People see it as an end. And that scares them. For they don't want their existence to end.

So People spend countless dollars on trying to escape death. We go through surgeries and treatments. We eat right and exercise so that we may have a healthy life and delay death for just a while longer. But people die. People you know die. And at some point people will attend your funeral. No one can escape death. Even our brother, Jesus died. That is the depth of Christ's humility and humanity. As Paul says in Philippians, **Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!**

It is estimated that over 50 million people die per year throughout the world. But none of those have changed you one bit. But the death of our brother 2000 years ago did. For Jesus offered himself up as a sacrifice. He paid for our own sins. He made the payment of blood for the forgiveness of sins that we were not able to make. That is how Jesus became our high priest. Only he could do this since he is true God and true man at the same time.

That sacrifice made atonement for his brothers. This word, translated as atonement, has two main meanings. One stresses the payment of Christ so that our sins are forgiven. The other focuses on the relationship we have with God on the basis of Christ's work. As you can see, the two are related. Here, however, we focus on the work of Christ. He made the payment for sins. It was a sacrifice of his blood. He appeased the wrath of God. And as a result we are now at-one with the Father.

Jesus may have made a sacrifice of atonement when he died on the cross, but he didn't stay dead. Three days after Jesus died he rose from the dead. He defeated death. And he crushed Satan's head. In verse 14 we read that Jesus **shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.** The devil holds the power of death because he brought sin into the world. And sin's penalty is death. And the sting of death is sin. But Christ has made the payment for our sins. There is no sting. Death won't end with eternal damnation for believers. The devil has been defeated and his power` destroyed.

And so we are not afraid of death. We read in verse 15 that Jesus became a human so that he could **free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.** We are no longer slaves to sin or death. Death is not an end. Death is the beginning of eternal life with our heavenly brother. So we don't have to be afraid of dying. We don't have to fear death so as to strive to avoid it. Death actually brings an end to pain. It brings the beginning of a perfect life.

We have a brother who is like us in every way. Except he had no sin. He was tempted like we are tempted every day. But where we fail, he didn't. Even though he was human and faced real temptations as us humans do, he never once succumbed to those temptations. The Writer the Hebrews tells us in chapter four that Jesus **has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.** And our brother knows our strengths and weaknesses. He knows when we are tempted and what we are tempted by. And he helps us. He gives us strength to follow his will. He enables us to withstand the temptation.

And when we fall into temptation he still helps us. That is why he suffered and died. He has paid the price of all our sins. Our brother may be like us even in temptation. But he is unlike us in that he saves us from when we fall into temptation.

I'm close with my brothers. Many people are close with their siblings. But we have one who is closer to us than anyone else: Christ. He is our brother in every way. He became like us in flesh and blood so he could serve as our substitute. Now we are no longer afraid of sin and death for our sins have been atoned for. We are close to Jesus because our brother came down from heaven to be like us, so that we may be like him eternally. Amen.