

A Greater Access

Jesus is Greater #7 - Pastor Gary Combs - November 12, 2023 - Hebrews 4:14-16

INTRO: Good morning church! We are continuing our series entitled, “JESUS IS GREATER: An Exposition of Hebrews.” Remember our theme verse is:

Hebrews 1:4 (NLT) This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.

Today, we'll be looking at Hebrews 4:14-16 in a sermon entitled, “A Greater Access.” Because Jesus is our great High Priest and our only true access to a relationship with God.

ILL: Have you ever had an All Access VIP pass for an event or concert? Some years ago I attended a leadership conference in Atlanta called Catalyst with a few of our staff. It was so good that I promoted it the following year to a group of about 50 pastors that I worked with in NC. I contacted the event leaders to see about getting a group rate. They assigned me a special concierge who offered us a better rate, VIP lanyards, floor seating, backstage and green room access. No waiting in lines. No fighting for seats. Free snacks. It was awesome!



Need: I suppose we all want special treatment, special access, especially to something or someone we deem important or valuable to us. We want to go backstage. We want to be able to sit in the reserved seats. We want to sit courtside and actually meet the players and coaches and feel that we're part of the team. We all have this deep need to know and be known. At its deepest level, I think this is a God-given desire for fellowship, with God and with others. God made us that way. And we'll feel disconnected and spiritually empty until we find access to Him.

Trans: How are you feeling about your relationship with God today? Do you feel close to God or distant today? Do you feel you have VIP access to Him?

BODY: In Hebrews 4:14-16, the Jewish background believers were challenged to respond rightly to Jesus as the great high priest opening up a greater access to God's throne of grace. We can respond rightly to Jesus as the great high priest who opens up greater access to God. How can we respond rightly to Jesus as the great high priest who opens up greater access to God? The text gives **three right responses** to this great access we have through Jesus.

Read text: Hebrews 4:14-16 (ESV) ¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

SINCE WE HAVE THIS GREAT ACCESS TO GOD IN JESUS...

1. Let us hold fast to our confession of Jesus as Lord.

EXP: (14) As our divine great high priest Jesus, the Son of God, intercedes for us. He passed beyond the curtain the seen into the unseen reality of the Holy of Holies in heaven. So let's cling to our testimony of Him!

“Since then” (14) - Lit., “Seeing therefore.” “[Since then] links this section back to the arguments in Hebrews 2. The author now begins to develop the priestly ministry of Jesus in more detail.” (Mohler, p.64)

“Great” (14) (μέγας, *megas*) - of quantity; of persons, for ability, virtue, authority, power; of scale, great.

“High Priest” (14) (ἀρχιερεύς, *archiereus*) - chief priest, high priest, only qualified one to enter Holy place.

“Passed through the heavens” (14) (διέρχομαι, *dierchomai*) - “The Jewish high priest went once a year into the most holy place in the temple, to offer the blood of the atonement. The great high priest (Jesus) has gone into heaven to make intercession, and to sprinkle the blood of the atonement on the mercy-seat.” (Barnes Commentary)

Hebrews 9:24-26 (ESV) ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

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“**Son of God**” (14) - He is a greater high priest because He is not a son of Aaron, but of God.

“**Hold fast**” (14) (κρατῶμεν, *kratomen*) (PAS) - to use strength, i.e. seize or retain (literally or figuratively):— hold (by, fast), keep, lay hand (hold) on, obtain, retain, take (by).

“**Confession**” (14) (ὁμολογία, *homologia*) - Lit., “same word.” Confession. Unlike their wilderness wandering forefathers, they were admonished to “hold fast” to their confession of faith. Not in their own strength, but depending on the power of their great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God. Keep the faith!

ARG: **What is this confession of faith? Paul gives us the answer:**

Romans 10:9 (ESV) because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Hold fast, cling to, don't let go of, your confession of faith in Jesus.

Hebrews 10:23 (ESV) Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

ILL: When I was a little boy, my dad was a manager at Sears and Roebuck. Sometimes he would take me up to the 3rd floor where the offices and employee break room was. I'd hold his hand as we got on the elevator. He'd let me press the button. We'd walk through the accounting area where all the ladies would say, “Claude, we can tell that's your son. He looks just like you.” He'd get me a candy bar and drink and we'd sit in the break room. I had access because I entered holding my father's hand.

APP: The Jewish high priest was the only one allowed in the Most Holy Place and then only once a year. He couldn't take anyone in there with him. But Jesus is our Great High Priest. As the Son of God, He has not entered into the real Most Holy Place in heaven, but holding His hand, we may enter too. Therefore, let us hold fast to our confession of faith Jesus our Lord!

2. Let us consider the sympathy Jesus has for us.

EXP: (15) As our incarnate great high priest He sympathizes with us and understands us. Yet without sin.

“**Sympathize**” (15) (συμπαθέω, *sumpatheō*) - Lit., “feel together with.” affected with the same feeling as another, to sympathize with, to feel for, have compassion on. “Touched with the feeling” (KJV).

“**Weaknesses**” (15) (ἀσθένεια, *astheneia*) - want of strength, weakness, infirmity

“**Every respect**” (15) (πᾶς, *pas*) - each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything

“**Tempted**” (15) (πειράω, *peiraō*) - to test, to make trial of one, put him to proof

“**Without sin**” (15) (ἁμαρτία, *hamartia*) - without any sin, offense, or wrongdoing. “These words show the nature and the limits of this sympathy of Christ.” (Ellicott's Commentary).

ARG: **Remember ch.2? Jesus became like us that He might show His mercy to us.**

Hebrews 2:17 (ESV) Therefore he had to be made **like his brothers in every respect**, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

ILL: Consider what Jesus went through: He endured the devil's temptations in the wilderness (Matt. 4). He was homeless (Matt. 8:20). His family thought he was crazy (Matt. 12:46). His best friends turned their back on him (Matt. 26:56). One of his closest confidants betrayed Him for silver (Matt. 26:46-50). He endured gossip and slander (Matt. 12:24). He was shamed publicly (Mk. 14:65). He endured periods of hunger and thirst (Mk. 11:12). His message was rejected, His preaching was critiqued, His disciples didn't “get it” (again..), and He endured complete and utter separation from God so that you and I would never, ever, ever have to!!

APP: Jesus understands you. He has sympathy for you. His sympathy is more than “I know how you feel.” It moved Him to compassion to become like us, so that we might become like Him. Look to Him!

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3. Let us confidently draw near God's throne through Jesus.

EXP: (16) As our great high priest He opens up access to God's mercy and grace. He purifies us.

"**With confidence**" (16) (παρρησία, *parrēsia*) - free and fearless confidence, boldness, assurance.

"**Draw near**" (16) (προσέρχομαι, *proserchomai*) - to come to, approach, draw near to,.

"**Throne of grace**" (16) (θρόνω τῆς χάριτος, *thronō tēs charitos*) - A throne is for kings. Grace is that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness, good will, loving-kindness, favor. "A throne of grace is designed to represent a sovereign seated to dispense mercy and pardon." (Barnes Commentary)

"**Receive mercy**" (16) (λαμβάνω, *lambanō*) - to take with the hand, lay hold of, to receive what is offered; mercy: kindness or good will towards the miserable and the afflicted, joined with a desire to help them.

"**Find grace**" (16) (εὕρισκω, *heuriskō*) - to come upon, after searching, to find a thing sought

"**Time of need**" (16) (εὐκαιρος, *eukairos*) - εὖ (good, well done) and καιρός (time, due season). This means seasonable, timely, opportune, good timing. We can find grace at the right time.

ARG: We can confidently draw near because Jesus has opened a "new and living way" to God.

Hebrews 10:19-22 (ESV) ¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have **confidence** to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² **let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

It was God's eternal purpose for Jesus to open up free and confident access to Him.

Ephesians 3:11-12 (ESV) ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and **access** with confidence through our faith in him.

ILL: There was a famous photograph taken by *Look* magazine photographer, Alan Stanley Tretick, in October 1963. It became iconic, especially since the photo appeared in *Look* only days after JFK's assassination. Perhaps you remember seeing it? It was of JFK and young John Jr. playing under the Resolute desk in the Oval office. Now, not just anyone can enter the Oval Office, but a son? Well, he can boldly, confidently and freely not only enter, but play under his father's desk!



APP: And through Jesus, the Son of God, we can confidently draw near to the Father's throne of grace! We don't have to fear His throne of justice, for Jesus appeared before it on our behalf. There only remains the throne of grace for those who believe in Jesus.

CONCLUSION: We can rightly respond to the access to God offered through faith in Jesus as our Great High Priest! Let us... 1) Hold fast to our confession of faith in Jesus as Lord. 2) Consider the sympathy and understanding that Jesus has for us. 3) Confidently and freely draw near to God's throne of grace through faith in Jesus. Holding the hand of Jesus we have great access into the Father's throne room!

My mother used to sing this old hymn by Tommy Dorsey written in 1932. I can still hear her voice...

Precious Lord, take my hand,	When my way grows drear,
Lead me on, let me stand,	Precious Lord, linger near,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;	When my life is almost gone,
Through the storm, through the night,	Hear my cry, hear my call,
Lead me on to the light:	Hold my hand lest I fall:
Take my hand, precious Lord,	
Lead me home.	

Let's pray.