

## *“Worship the Son”*

### **Fixing Our Eyes On Jesus Our High Priest**

Hebrews 1:1-6

Pastor Jeff Stivason

January 26, 2018

**Jeff:** Our heavenly Father, we're so thankful to bow before You this morning. We're thankful for every opportunity to be before You. And we know that You are an omnipresent God. You are all-present. And yet it is during those times that we can climb into the closet either alone or together and pray to You that we find a remarkable presence and a comfort in it. And Father, we come before You today, asking that Your hand would be upon us for good. And we know that it is, and we pray that it will continue to be and have confidence that it will.

And yet, Father, in the midst of a world that is racked with sin and havoc we know that sometimes in spite of what we know, we fear. Sometimes we feel as though we're downtrodden. Sometimes we feel weary. And so, Father, we pray that You will gather us to Yourself and strengthen us by Your grace this morning.

Father, at the passing of Carol and Edie, folks especially in the family can't help but feel weary and discouraged. And yet there is comfort in the Lord Jesus Christ. For when one passes in Him, we know that despite the separation of body from soul and their separation from us, they are never separate from Christ. And so Father, we're thankful for that. And we remember the family. We remember Brook and Dave and Ty and their families this morning. And we pray for Your encouragement to be in their hearts.

Father, we also pray for Mark and for his recovery, and for the accompanying needs that he'll have, and for those who have stepped into the gap for him. We're also thankful for the good news about Mike, and pray that would continue. Our hearts are encouraged and lightened by that news.

And yet, Father, we also pray for Bruce. And despite the heaviness of heart, we pray for him, despite his discouragements one after another. We are reminded that we walk the way of Christ's humiliation. And we're reminded that this is a vale of tears for the believer. And yet through the tears we see the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we're reminded that that glory is ours in Him. And so despite hardships, we look forward to seeing Him face to face as He is, and yet knowing that in this valley we are being conformed to His likeness. And so we're thankful for even the valley.

Father, as we gather before You today to study the book of Hebrews together, we pray that Your hand would be upon us, that Your Spirit would illuminate the text, and that we would be better for having been here and that we would look more like the Lord Jesus Christ for having studied. And we pray for these things in our lives and in the lives of those we've lifted up today in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Well men, this morning let's turn to Hebrews chapter 1. And let's look at verses 4-6 this morning. I forgot my glasses. So even if I want to read, I'm going to struggle a little bit. So how about somebody volunteering who has his glasses to read 4-6 this morning? Does anybody want to do that and read loud? Don, go ahead. Don, you can

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actually read 1-6 to give us the context again, to remind us of what we’ve looked at already. Go ahead.

**Don:** “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the Prophets. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature. And He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

“For to which of the angels did God ever say,  
‘You are My Son; Today I have begotten You?’

“Or again,

‘I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son?’

“And again, when He brings the Firstborn into the world, He says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship Him.’” This is the word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** Let me give you our outline for today. We’re simply going to go through some introductory pieces. We’re going to ask a very fundamental question: *why angels?* And then we’re going to try and make some sense out of the Son in light of the answer that we give to that question. So let’s begin by thinking about some introductory pieces.

I want you to think about something that I think we probably all think about, and yet maybe not consciously so. It’s in the back of our thinking. It stands behind everything that we do, at least in terms of our church attendance and our practices.

I want you to think about a *posture*. You know, years ago when I was a younger man, I took what was called *pucalon shimindi*. It was an Indonesian martial art.

**Participant:** How is that spelled? (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** I can’t. In fact, let me say this to you, Don. There was a time, I thought not too long ago, when I made it to the brown belt. I hadn’t made it to my black belt. And I got out of bed one morning and I thought, you know? One of the things that I’m always going to regret is not having secured the black belt. So I got up that morning and I just said, “It’s okay! Brown’s good!” (*Laughter*) Brown is great!

But one of the things that I learned from taking that instruction was where to put your eyes when you’re in a fight. You know, your tendency is to look the guy right in the eye because you want to intimidate him. But you feel intimidated back, so you’re trying to hide him here in your eyes. You see, that sort of thing. But the instructor said, “Don’t look him in the eyes. You look him right in the chest.”

And there are two reasons for looking at him in the chest. #1, you can see his entire body. You can see his feet move. You can see his hands move. And secondly, you never have to look in his eyes. (*Laughter*)

There’s a basic posture in almost everything that we do. And the preacher has a basic posture when it comes to standing not only in his pulpit, but when it comes to his general standing before his people. And I want you to understand something. This is really

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important, because oftentimes a congregation will take on the cast, the cue, the reflection of the minister’s posture.

In other words, that congregation, whether it’s instilled intentionally or not, will come to resemble the emphases of the pastor in some way, shape or form. It’s inevitable. And I want you to know that a pastor will communicate those kinds of emphases whether he wants to or not, whether it’s intentional or not, by his teaching and by the way he interacts with people. It will come through.

And I want you to know that up front we have that in this particular sermon. And I bring it to your attention not necessarily because it’s vital to our understanding this morning, but I actually think it is vital. And I want to communicate it to you this morning because I think it’s vital for not only looking at this morning, but for looking at the rest of the sermon. In other words, we’re going to see something that I think is going to be helpful for us. And it’s this.

This is the preacher’s basic posture toward this congregation. No matter how hard the struggle, no matter how alluring the temptation, no matter how inviting that lustful temptation may be, no matter what, here is his basic posture. *These believers are never in the mental state they were in prior to being Christians.* That’s a fundamental posture.

Now let me illustrate what I mean by that as being a fundamental posture in the mind of the preacher. The preacher could get up into the pulpit. This preacher could get up into the pulpit, harangue these people and treat them as if their conversion is dubious, as if he’s not sure whether they’re converted or not. And so he talks to them that way. He communicates to them as if he’s doubting what’s going on in their lives.

You can do that as a preacher. And let me tell you something. When you do that as a preacher, you will communicate an emphasis to your congregation that is not helpful to them.

That’s not what this preacher does. This preacher communicates to them that though they may fall to the bottom of the barrel, there is a limit. There is a bottom to the barrel. And that bottom of the barrel is not what they used to be.

Let me give you a confessional understanding of that. The Westminster Confession, Chapter 18, Section 4 says this. The believer “*is never utterly destitute of that seed of God and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty.*” Never, no matter how far they’ve fallen, they are never utterly destitute of those things.

I want you to understand how the preacher does this. He has this assumption. So when he comes to chapter 5, we’re going to see that this doctor of their souls says some hard things to them. I already pointed it out to you. He says to them, for instance, “You’re sluggish! You’re dull of hearing! By now you should have been teachers yourselves. But I’ve got to go back to the basics with you!”

Then he says this to them in chapter 6. He says this. “*But beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you and the things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking this way to you.*” That’s that basic posture.

Now when you have that basic posture, you can say all the hard things you need to say. But you have that basic presupposition that they are not what they once were.

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So when you have this basic posture—and this is the vital key—when you have that basic posture—the hard things that you have to say to people—what’s the solution to getting them up out of that? What’s the solution? What do you do?

Well the solution is what we’ve already looked at. *You fix their eyes on Jesus Christ.* And isn’t that interesting? That’s exactly what he does in these first four verses. In these first four verses he says, before he says anything else, “Now let me tell you something about Jesus Christ. Let me tell you that He is the exact representation of the Father. He is of the *ousia* of the Father. He’s of the same substance as the Father. Let me tell you something else. He is the radiance of His glory.”

He is a different Person in the Godhead, though He is of the same substance. But let me tell you something. His glory is not derived; it’s original. His radiance is the radiance of the Father.

“Let me tell you something else,” he says. He is the Alpha Creator and the Omega Inheritor of all of the prophetic promises. In other words, He even created the prophets. He created their message. And by the way, He’s the inheritor and the fulfillment of that message.

Look at how he sets our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. He doesn’t permit us to take our eyes off. But he knows that he’s going to say some hard things to them. And so he sets their eyes in the right spot before he even gets to that point. That is the basic posture that we have to understand as we go throughout this sermon.

And I want to say it to you this morning because I don’t want you to forget it. I may forget to mention it to you. But I don’t want you to forget it.

All right. Now having said that, there are some basic questions that arise when we look at this particular sermon. When we look at this particular sermon, we sometimes think that we know all the basics of the book of Hebrews. And we know what’s being taught. We know the message in general. But there are things that are here, the details that we skip over that we forget about, that we don’t read further into, because we give credence to the rest of the message.

And one of those things is what does he mean when he says that Jesus became better or greater than the angels? What does he mean by that? That’s in our text.

What does he mean? He’s already said to us that Jesus is the exact representation of the Father. He is the radiance of His glory. He is the Alpha Creator, the Omega Inheritor of the promises. What does it mean that He has become better than the angels?

And not only that. The questions don’t stop there. This eternal Son is what? The inheritor of the title *Son*. What does he mean by those sorts of things?

You see, those are the kinds of questions that are posed to us as we look at this particular text. And we need to remember something else that’s just as important as the posture. One of the things that we need to remember when we look at a text like this is that *theological questions have a practical end to them.*

Now when I say that I have something particular in mind. I heard Sinclair Ferguson say one time that as a part of the Doctorate of Ministry program, that he always asked the students who were trying to attain the Doctorate of Ministry, he always asked them one

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question. The question he asked them is this. *What is the practical significance of the doctrine of the Trinity?*

And he said that one of the reasons he asked that particular question is because he said that not only in scholarship are we getting this idea that the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most ethereal, abstract doctrines of the Christian faith that doesn't really have any practical significance, but that pastors can't seem to defend the doctrine of the Trinity. And on top of that they, of all people, don't think that it is of any pastoral significance. And so he would ask them. #1. Can you defend the doctrine of the Trinity? And #2. What is the pastoral significance of the Trinity?

And he said that the answers that he received were oftentimes flimsy. And he said that it's no wonder that the Jehovah's Witnesses laugh when they hear us express the doctrine of the Trinity and its practical import for the Christian life.

And yet he would say—and I agree 100% with him—when you look at what Jesus did on the night in which He was betrayed, do you remember what He did according to John's Gospel? He gave them a lesson on the Trinity. He spoke to them about the Father. He spoke to them about His relationship to the Father. He spoke to them about the coming Spirit. He gave them a lesson on the Trinity. In other words, here were these disciples who were really frail, who were fearful of His departure, who were frightened for their own lives, and He's giving them a theological lesson.

Now I want to say to you that I sometimes wonder. If we got into the midst of a situation that was really dire, and we invited someone to come in and talk to us about what's going on here,—can you help us out? Can you help us to make sense of what's going on? And the person stood up there and said, “Let me talk to you today about the Trinity,” would we think that person hit the mark? We might gather that person at the intermission and pull him back into the back room and say to him, “Hey, brother, listen to us. I know that you like theology and that's really good. And we need people like that, and we'll need people like that after we get through this difficult time. But right now we need to know what to do.”

And that's when you have to put your arm around that person and you have to say to him, Look. The gospel is never about what we do.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** The gospel is about who God is and what God has done.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** And because of what God has done, I do. And you see, sometimes, in our most critical moments, we think, I have to do something. And more often it's the case that we have to go back and remember what it is that God has done, because I want to tell you something. I don't know about you, but that's where I derive my strength, in remembering what God has done for me.

So what we have here is that we have a lot of theology in this letter to a people who have lost their possessions, possibly been exiled, spread out across the Roman Empire. And I want to tell you something. When you get kicked out of Rome, when you get exiled to the outermost part of the Empire, guess who doesn't flip the bill.

**Participant:** Rome.

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**Jeff:** It’s on your tab. And so the theological questions that are here are spoken to the lives of a people who have not only been persecuted, but the threat of persecution still hangs over them. And as a result,—and here’s the point—they desire to go back to what was familiar and what was perhaps safer—Judaism. And so what you find is that you find the preacher setting their eyes in a very practical way on Jesus Christ. And that’s the great necessity.

And the question that I have for you is this. *Where are your eyes?* We’re going to come back to that throughout this lesson. But the question has to be where are your eyes? I mean, you all have situations. You’re not in exile. But every one of us has a situation. We heard this morning about two brothers and their loss, you know? And so we need to think about our own situation. And we need to think about how it is that what God has done can help us. And the first thing that we need to do when we think about that question is to think about where our eyes are fixed.

Well those are some introductory things. Let me ask you. Are there any questions about that? I realize that’s a lot. Any thoughts or questions? Don?

**Don:** Just a comment. I think the doctrine of the Trinity is crucial. For Unitarian or Muslim people who believe that God is one Person, how did God communicate His love? Because love, you know, has to have an object. And in the Trinity we have love. We have eternal love. The love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is communicated to us in Jesus Christ.

**Jeff:** Yes. And the great thing is that as the triune God, He didn’t need to create in order to be expressive of His love.

**Don:** Exactly.

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Participant:** It seems to me that why we don’t take the Trinity seriously in our hearts is that in part we tend to be Arminians. And in the Arminian view you almost only need Jesus. You really don’t need the other Two.

**Jeff:** Yes. You know, the great thing about it, though, is that on your knees when you’re praying, you’re always a Calvinist. *(Laughter)*

**Participant:** All right, brother.

**Jeff:** All right. Anyway—

**Participant:** Are you going to discuss the Trinity? Are you going to go through this? Are you going to answer that question that we started out with? Will we begin to discuss that? Will we address that theological question?

**Jeff:** What’s the question now?

**Participant:** About the Trinity. Are we going to get into that as we go through this study? Is that something you’re going to address?

**Jeff:** Well as it comes up, I’m going to take up where it arises.

**Participant:** Since you started out—

**Jeff:** Yes, since I started out. *(Laughter)* We’ll be thinking about it along the way. But if we want to have a class specifically on the Trinity and its defense, and pastoral obligations, that would be great. I’m happy to do that. I’m actually really happy to do that. But you’ll have to give me some feedback, and maybe you can do it through some

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of the more influential guys like Sig and Don. *(Laughter)* But I am looking for that kind of feedback if you want to do a segment like we did through sanctification, looking in Sinclair Ferguson’s book, that kind of thing.

**Participant:** That would probably help us as far as knowing that we believe in God, and God demonstrates His love through the object of Jesus Christ. But we know the Holy Spirit. We don’t know Jesus. I never met Him personally. The disciples did. *(unclear)* We know the Holy Spirit. But we hope someday to see Jesus.

**Jeff:** The only thing about it though, is that when Paul talks about the Spirit and the Lord, economically He intertwines them together, because the Spirit’s work is economically so connected, the work of the Spirit is so connected to drawing glory to Jesus Christ that in knowing the Spirit we can say that we know the Son, just like when Jesus says, “Seeing Me, you’ve seen the Father.” So there’s this idea that there’s the doctrine of *appropriations*. There is work appropriated to each Person of the Trinity.

However, there is a sense that the work, the external work of the Trinity in the work of redemption is indivisible. What One does, the Other has a role in, a significant role, such that you can’t divide them. So when we think theologically about the Trinity and about the work They accomplished, there’s a unit to that. So again, that’s part of that Trinitarian doctrine that emerges from tying some of those texts together. Hold on a minute, Don.

**Participant:** Mainly from Isaiah and Ezekiel.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** Whenever it says that we are in Christ and Christ is in us, isn’t it really Christ’s Spirit or the Holy Spirit? Is that the intertwining as well, because if Christ is in us now, And we’re in Christ now, that’s done through the Holy Spirit.

**Jeff:** So when we think about union with Christ, we basically think in three ways. We think in a *predestinarian way*, that I was predestined to be in union with Christ—rather, united to Christ. We think in a *spiritual way*. And that’s not an abstract way. The Spirit has united me by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. And we think in an *experiential way*, or an existential way. We truly experience the fruit of the Spirit that the Spirit produces in us by virtue of that union with Christ. So when we think about union with Christ, we typically think about it through those three vantage points. Does that make sense?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Okay. Don, you had your hand up.

**Don:** Yes. Just to clarify, Jeff, for people who may not be familiar with these terms—the *ontological* and *economic* Trinity?

**Jeff:** Thanks a lot, Don. So when we think about the *ontological Trinity* versus the *economic Trinity*, we’re only thinking about two aspects of the one Trinity. In other words, we need categories in order to think. If we don’t have categories, we can’t say much that’s meaningful. And oftentimes what we say in terms of meaning is just description and not definition, because how can we define an ineffable God?

So when we think about this distinction between *ontological* and *economic*, we’re thinking about a thought division in regard to the Trinity on the basis of how He has revealed Himself.

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*Ontological* is usually referring to the Trinity prior to creation, what God is in and of Himself before He creates. When we think about the *economic* Trinity, we’re thinking about God as Creator and as Redeemer. We’re thinking about the work that He has assigned Himself to accomplish.

And we think about the individual work of the Father having allocated some, like the bracelets we have. The Father allocates some. The Son accomplishes redemption for the some. And the Holy Spirit applies that work of the Son to them. And so that’s the kind of work that we’re thinking about when we think about the work of the Trinity. Yes? You had something, Kerry?

**Kerry:** Bear with me.

**Jeff:** Hold on just a second.

**Participant:** The big point is that as God has shown Himself to be in relating to us, this is who He actually is, even though we can’t fully grasp that.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** He’s faithful to Himself in His revelation.

**Jeff:** Yes, and that’s a good point. Hold on just a second, Kerry. So when you think about the doctrine of the Trinity, there are some liberal theologians who will say that you can’t get back to the ontological Trinity. And we would say no. What God has revealed as Himself prior to creation is what He is.

**Participant:** Right.

**Jeff:** We’re not going to die and find out that oh! God is an entirely different God! We’re going to find that when we encounter God, He’s consistent with what He has revealed Himself to be. Kerry, go ahead.

**Kerry:** Well, I said to myself, “Self, what it comes down to is that right now I’m warm all the way through.”

**Jeff:** Hmm.

**Kerry:** It’s just wonderful! I wonder. How is it that I can be so awkward and so cold? It’s just amazing! How can this be? Kerry, how do you do the things you do and respond the way you do? And here’s why education has such a big role, you know. And that is my downfall, my weakness. But yet, the depth of His love is so great. You just can’t deny what’s there. And yet I always feel so awkward and out of place so many times!

**Jeff:** You know, Kerry, I think that’s the residue of sin that remains in us all.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** And so when you’re feeling your heart strangely warmed when you hear about these kinds of things, it’s because you’re hearing about the God who reconciles us to Himself. And when you feel awkward about it, you feel distant and you feel your own sinfulness, you recognize that that’s the old man who is dead that I’m continuing to put to death, or to clean up that mess by the power of the Holy Spirit in my life, that I might continually attain Christ. Like Paul says, I work out my “*salvation with fear and trembling.*”

**Kerry:** I’m always so grateful to be around all these love- responsive people who showed up. It’s so great!

**Jeff:** Yes.

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**Kerry:** And just being here—the vocabulary, the thoughts and stuff. I’m not comfortable saying what’s inside of me a lot of times. I never could. You know, this is so important to me.

**Jeff:** That’s great.

**Kerry:** Being involved with God’s grace is wonderful!

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Participant:** You know, with this in mind, I hear a lot of preachers telling me that I am a filthy, dirty rag.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** And I always felt like I was a filthy, dirty rag. And I don’t feel like I am anymore. But I feel that my sin is a filthy, dirty thing. But I don’t feel like I am a filthy, dirty rag anymore. And I always felt that I was misspoken to. I don’t think that’s what Christ is telling me when I speak to Him, that I’m a filthy, dirty rag. I think that He’s saying that I’m surely in the light, but that my sin is filthy dirty. And I have been in church many times, and really not comfortable being told that I am a filthy, dirty rag anymore, because I don’t believe I am. I believe that I’m white as snow, and I believe that my sin is. So how do you look at that?

**Jeff:** Yes. It’s one of those things that you need to balance out, right? You have to balance the idea that the sin that is in me is still the sin that I do. And yet, as I appear before God, I am a saint. I am white as snow. I am in Christ, and therefore wearing the righteousness of Christ as a robe before God. And so I think it’s appropriate to talk about the sin that is in us, the sin that needs crucified in us. The old man is dead, and yet we talk about mortification of sin. And that’s the tension in which we live in our vocabulary, right?—how we put to death what is already dead and yet remains.

But I think that what we need to do is this. So I’ll give you an autobiographical reflection and a confession. So get out the couch and you can hear me out. *(Laughter)*

When I was first in the ministry, one of the things that I did a lot of was the exact thing that you’re talking about. I used to think to myself, you know, 95% talking about sinfulness, and the horrors of sin and the terrors of hell, and then 5% of giving them grace.

I’ll tell you what the problem with that is. The problem with that is that usually what that looks like is this. It usually looks like this. I’m receding, right? Keep that in mind. Somebody will say this. Look! Do you realize that if you have the grace of God in you, you will do? You’ll do. And your righteousness will exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. And do you realize how righteous they were? They tithed on the smallest things! Does your righteousness exceed that righteousness?

**Participant:** No.

**Jeff:** Now I want to tell you something. It probably doesn’t. And I’ve got good news for you. There’s grace. And the grace of God forgives even, even your unrighteousness.

Do you want that? Well, if you have that,—do you see where I’m going? If you have that, if you have any evidence that you have that, then you will begin to show that righteousness that exceeds the Scribes and the Pharisees. And what do you get yourself into? I mean, there’s truth in what I just said. But in presenting it that way, what you

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begin to do is that you begin to build within people a sense of works righteousness. Grace is very small in that view.

So what do people do as a response? As a response to that, as a response to the flirtations with legalism, what they do is that they go like this. God loves you! He loves you!

**Participant:** Isn't it the hope that they reach deeper into their pockets for the plate?  
(*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** And they say, “And He loves you!” Now listen! You know, you're a father. And as a father you expect that when you tell your boy not to touch the VCR—I'm dating myself!—(*Laughter*) that he won't touch the VCR. So for instance, God wants you to give. (*Laughter*)

But now there's a flirtation with antinomianism. And antinomianism says that it's all grace. There's no expectation that God has for me in terms of obedience. It's all grace, all grace, all grace. And really, the answer is not flirtation with legalism or flirtation with antinomianism. Really, the answer is union with Jesus Christ.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Because when I'm united to Jesus Christ—and remember when we went through the sanctification lesson!—I have both the forensic righteousness. God has declared me righteous in Jesus Christ. But I have the renovative righteousness. *Definitive sanctification*—I have been removed from the kingdom of darkness and placed into the kingdom of light that I might *progress* in my sanctification. And I cannot have one without the other in union with Christ.

And so the best way to preach is to follow the text.

**Participant:** Praise God!

**Jeff:** The best way to preach is to follow the text. And when it talks about grace, talk about grace. And when it talks about law, talk about law.

**Participant:** Hallelujah!

**Jeff:** The best thing to do is just to follow the text of Scripture, because it will lead you in all the right places.

**Men:** Amen. (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** Isn't there a country song that says something about that? No, that's leading you into the wrong places. (*Laughter*)

**Participant:** Moving on. (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** We'll come back to that next week. (*Laughter*) Yes, Bill?

**Bill:** Since you brought up preachers of categories, in my life I've heard a lot of sermons.

**Jeff:** You've heard a lot of sermons.

**Bill:** And they seem to fall into one of two categories. Basically, one is all about Christ and what He's done, or it's all about us and what we need to do. And you can guess what I've heard the most of.

**Jeff:** Yes. Actually, there's something interesting. There's actually a third category, at least if you're Reformed. And the extra category I'm going to mention could still be subsumed under the first category you mentioned. But really, there's a slight difference.

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So, for instance, when you think about the three things that you might hear today, you might here *do*. We'll put that on the table. You might hear that sermon. Do! But you will more likely hear not the gospel that is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, because that's the gospel. And that's called the *historia salutis*, the history of salvation. That's the gospel. The gospel is from the Incarnation to the Ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That's really the gospel.

But what you will hear far more in the Reformed church today is the *ordo salutis*, election through glorification. So you'll hear about predestination. You'll hear about conversion. You'll hear about justification. You'll hear about sanctification. You'll hear about something, and people will say, “That's the gospel.” And really, that's not the gospel. That's the Spirit's application of the gospel to my life. And therefore what it really becomes is experiential.

And so there's a sense in which there's this third move within the Reformed church. Now I'm not saying that the *ordo salutis* is bad. I think the *ordo salutis* is good. And I think it ought to be preached. Paul preaches it in Romans chapter 8. But what I'm saying is that when that becomes a substitute for the gospel, when the application of the gospel becomes a substitute for the gospel, sometimes the gospel gets a little blurry.

For instance, remember what I said to you last time. Not the last time. I said to you a time or two ago that the gospel gets blurry when we only think about Jesus' work on the cross. When we only think about His work on the cross, what did Jesus do for me? He died for me. No, no, no. He was obedient from the very first, and that obedience culminated in His death on the cross. There you get His entire obedience, His active obedience, His entire obedient life, which was necessary for Him to be an innocent sacrifice on the cross, and His passive obedience, His offering of Himself on the cross. You get His entire obedience for me.

And so sometimes, when you focus on just one thing, what you can end up with is that you can end up with a truncated gospel, not because you're trying to truncate it, but because you're not fluent in it. And when you're not fluent in it, you take upon yourself sort of the ways of speaking in the church. Well then, what happens is that you end up losing essential parts of the gospel. So I think there's actually a third way to think about preaching today that you have to be careful of. Anything else? I'm not going to try to answer *why angels?* (*Laughter*) Don?

**Don:** I think that when we're dealing either with what man does or what Christ does, I think that what you said before is very important. We need to go where the text goes.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Don:** For example, if you're going through Ephesians, then in the first three chapters you're going to talk about what Christ has done. But when you get to 4, 5 and 6, while not ignoring what Christ has done, there's application.

**Jeff:** Yes, absolutely.

**Don:** And you can't just bypass that.

**Jeff:** Yes, absolutely. Okay, anything else?

**Participant:** Well, why angels? (*Laughter*)

## “Worship the Son”

**Jeff:** Why angels? Good question. That’s a question we’ll answer next week.  
(Laughter)

**Participant:** Good answer.

**Jeff:** Let me just say that when you think about some of these things regarding the Trinity, when you think about them, they arise in the midst of discussions within the church. And so, for instance, when you’re trying to think about the unity of the three Persons, you know that there was an early church father who offered the phrase *opera ad extra Trinitatus indivisa sunt*. The external works of the Trinity are indivisible.

And that whole idea is trying to answer something that’s in the church from the Scriptures. Why is it that there seems to be an emphasis on this particular Person or that particular Person? And the theologians of the church have always drawn people back to the Scriptures and said, no, no, no. When we think about the work of the triune Persons in the world, you can’t divide it.

**Participant:** Right.

**Jeff:** And then somebody will come along and say, “Well wait a minute! Did the Father really die on the cross? We don’t believe in what was called *Patripatianism*, do we?”

And somebody will say, “Well no, no, no. There is this thing. Let’s call it *the doctrine of appropriations*.” And so there are some works that are appropriate to the Son that the Son does in His own Person. And yet neither the Father nor the Spirit can be divorced from them.

For instance, you find in the Gospels, when Jesus gives up His spirit, that there’s a sense in which one could say that’s not just the human spirit that he’s talking about, though I think it is. But when you read theologically what’s happening there, for instance in Mark chapter 3, with the Spirit’s descent, and when at the Crucifixion His giving up His spirit, there’s a sense in which theologically you could make the case that there’s a sense in which the Holy Spirit is at work here in the Son. And the Holy Spirit who enabled the Son to resist temptation and to offer Himself as a perfect sacrifice is now relinquished in the Son’s bodily death.

And so though there are things appropriate to the Son, there is that unity of the triune Persons in the work He does in our redemption. Anyway, some time we’ll come back to this. (Laughter) This is wonderful stuff.

Let me pray. Father, thank You for this day. Bless our time together, and Lord, bless our day. Bless us, Lord, as we go forth. And help us to think upon Your word and Your Son and You. And help us to do that by the power of the Spirit living in us. Father, we ask again that Your hand would be upon Brook and David and Ty and their loss, and we pray that You’ll comfort them and their families. We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen. (Applause)