

MOVING TOWARD MATURITY

WHAT A DIFFERENCE THE HIGH PRIEST MAKES!

TEXT: Heb. 4:14-16

INTRODUCTION: At the beginning of Hebrews chapter 4, the Holy Spirit says, "Now I want you to think about Jesus as the High Priest. He then addresses two groups of people that have a special need for the High Priestly ministry of Jesus, and I suspect that most of you here today on this beautiful Easter morning, are in at least one of those two groups. Some of you are in both.

The first group were folks who are tired, not just physically tired, but mentally worn out, emotionally stressed, spiritually exhausted, and the Spirit of God said, "Let me tell you how to enter into God's rest through His Son and your High Priest."

Now in verse 14, He addresses the second group. And I would label this group the oppressed. Generally, when we think about the oppressed, we think about groups that because of race or ethnicity have been oppressed, sometimes to the point of genocide or slavery. And certainly those people are part of those who are oppressed and those oppressed groups can be found all around the world.

But I want you to think this morning in a more general sense about the oppressed. The oppressed include all of those who are being treated unjustly by individuals or groups who are in authority over them.

- The man who cannot get a job because of the color of his skin.
- The woman who does not receive a well deserved promotion because of her gender.
- The falsely accused who is locked up because he cannot afford an adequate defense.
- The wife who is abused by her husband.
- The child who is abused by her father.
- The student denied an honor because of his religion.

And you may say, well, Bro. Mike all of that is very bad and very sad, but what does it have to do with Jesus being the High Priest to all who believe?

And I will tell you, it has everything to do with it. Because Jesus said in the early days of His ministry,

Lk 4:18-21 ¹⁸ “ *The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;* ¹⁹ *To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.*”

²⁰ Then He closed the book, and gave *it* back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Jesus came to set the captives free and to give liberty to the oppressed. And that portion of Hebrews 4 we will read this morning and the verses following in Heb. 5, tell us a great deal about how the Lord Jesus Christ sets people free, how He sets people free from bondage whether it is because of race, gender, religion, age, poverty, or abuse. Jesus gives liberty to the oppressed as a part of His role and ministry as the Great High Priest. Let us read about it.

Hebrews 4:14-16 ¹⁴ Seeing then that 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 cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet without sin.* ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

What I want to say to you men and women who are being treated inequitably at work just because you are a Christian or because of your gender - maybe you are not receiving equal pay for equal work, there is a source of help and hope.

I want to say to women who are abused by the misuse of authority by a husband or a father or some other authority, male or female, there is for you help and hope.

I want to say to men who are abused by some authority at work or by governmental authority, there is a means of help.

And that help and hope that is available does not come from an organization of people whose primary attitude is one of bitterness and rebellion. And becoming bitter and rebellious is not what is going to help you to gain victory in your just and deserving cause.

I want to tell you that in those cases where you have a legitimate, righteous grievance, complaint, issue, cause, the Almighty God has given you a most powerful means to address these grievances in your life or in the life of your wives, sons, daughters or mothers, sisters, or friends. **That powerful means is by giving you direct access to a Great High Priest.** Today I want to tell you “What a Difference The High Priest Makes.”

The High Priest makes a difference...

I. BECAUSE THIS HIGH PRIEST IS ALIVE!

Heb. 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens,

Listen friend, when I want help with a problem, I don't go to the cemetery to try to find assistance. Neither should you.

When you know Jesus, you have a risen Savior! A living Lord! He has passed through the heavens and sits at the right hand of the Father. He is living, and He can help.

II. BECAUSE OF THE CHARACTER AND AUTHORITY OF THIS HIGH PRIEST.

Heb. 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession.

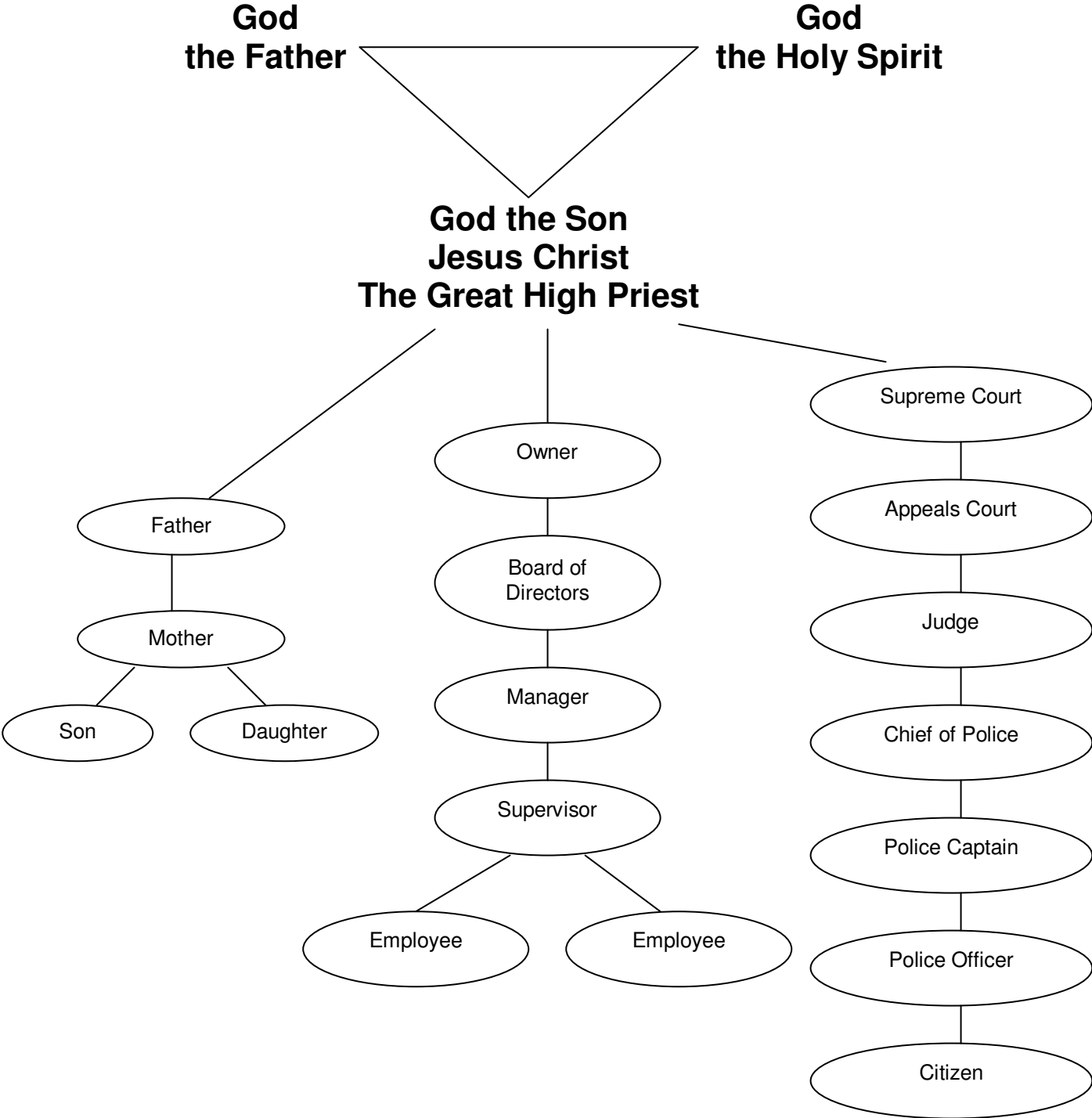
A. Your high priest is the Son of God, One with God.

1. **God shows no partiality.** Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality."
2. **Christ does not prefer one gender over another, one class over another, one race over another.** Gal. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
 - a. That does not mean that there are not specific gender roles that God has decreed.
 - b. It means that He has not made those decrees out of favoritism or preference.
 - c. His designations are like the designations that one piece of clay is made into the plate, another into a bowl. There are differences, but one is not preferred over the other.
3. **Jesus is the Righteous Judge.** 2 Tim. 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.
 - a. **When you have a cause that is righteous and biblical** (those two are always the same),
 - b. **The Lord Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest is always on your side.**
 - 1) When a person's wages at work are inequitable, whether because of persecution, gender discrimination or some other reason, Jesus is on your side because: **1 Tim 5:18** For the Scripture says, "*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,*" and, "*The laborer is worthy of his wages.*"
 - 2) If you are being abused or mistreated because someone is misusing their authority, Jesus is on your side.

B. Your high priest has been appointed to His authority by God.

1. **Jesus' authority as the Great High Priest is forever.** Heb. 5:6 As He also says in another place: "*You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek*";
2. **He is the final and ultimate authority.** All things are under His feet. Eph. 1:22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all things to the church,

What difference does the high priest make if you have a grievance or a righteous cause? All the difference in the universe, because there is someone at the very top who always does what is right and good! Look at the "Lines of Authority Chart" below. No matter where you are in that line of authority, as a believer, as a child of God, you can always cry out to the One at the top.



Why does our High Priest make a difference?

III. BECAUSE OF THE SYMPATHY OF THIS HIGH PRIEST.

Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.

A. Are you oppressed and afflicted?

Jesus was oppressed and afflicted. Isa. 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; ...

B. Are you being mistreated and abused by those in authority over you?

Jesus was mistreated and abused by those in authority over Him.

C. You have someone to whom to appeal your case who sympathizes with your righteous cause because He has been there.**D. When we are wronged, mistreated, abused, our instruction is in:**

1 Pet 2:18-23 ¹⁸ Servants, *be* submissive to *your* masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. ¹⁹ For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God. ²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for **us*, leaving **us* an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² "*Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth*"; ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

1. Do not get rebellious and bitter;

stay submissive to authority, even to the harsh.

2. Endure with patience in the same way Jesus did.**3. Do not revile or threaten.****4. Commit it to Him Who judges righteously.**

Take them to court,

not man's court,

God's court!

5. Your sympathetic High Priest waits to hear you there.

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IV. BECAUSE OF THE AVAILABILITY OF THIS HIGH PRIEST.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

A. We may come boldly to the throne of grace at any time.

1. It often takes years to get a matter to man's court, and then many years to appeals court and maybe never to Supreme Court. But you can go to God's courtroom today!
2. Most of us could never get an audience with the President of the United States, but you can talk as long as you want with the King of the Universe.

B. When you come, you find grace and help in your time of need.

1. There is no promise that you will get your version of the right solution in the next five minutes.
2. God may not put a notice of a raise in your email tomorrow.
3. He may not strike your boss dead as you believe he so richly deserves.
4. Pilate did not fall dead on the pavement after sentencing Christ, and the soldiers who drove the nails in His hands were not themselves immediately impaled upon a cross.
5. **But when you go to the Great High Priest, two things always happen.**
 - a. **Ultimately, in God's perfect timing, justice and righteousness is done.**
 - b. **The help you need, in the form God knows is best, is given to you by your sympathetic High Priest.**

CONCLUSION: So, you see what a difference the High Priest makes? Women, do you see it? Men, do you see it as well? I end with two questions?

Do you have a sympathetic High Priest? Only by faith in Christ!

When you are oppressed, afflicted, wronged, do you go to Him and His throne room or do you rant, rave, revile, and rebel against the things of the world. Listen to God's Word: Seeing we have a great High Priest... who sympathizes with our weaknesses...let us come boldly to the throne of grace and obtain mercy and help.