

Sunday September 29, 2019
Lesson 5: God's Ultimate Messenger
Scripture: Hebrews 1: 1-2, 6-12

Context:

The next focus on God moves to the New Testament. The purpose statement of the lesson is to affirm that Jesus is God's ultimate messenger to us. From the lesson we will learn about the Son in the Trinity and the role that Jesus plays in our lives.

Hebrews is a beautiful book full of poetic imagery to describe God and the relationship God has with humanity. The community to whom it is written is not known, but the prose and content indicate it was sermonic exhortation to speak to the hearts of listeners.¹ The opening begins with the writer reminding the listeners and readers that God has always spoken to humans. There is a reciprocal relationship between the speech of God and the people of God.² God spoke to the Israelite people, the ancestors of those reading and listening, and God spoke through the prophets and scriptures. Humans were God's mouthpieces and revealed divine speech as evident in the stories of Moses, Aaron, Rahab, Deborah, Isaiah, Amos, and so many others.³ This is a God who uses people to send messages to entire groups and generation after generation.

The next verse continues to name that there is one who connects the prophets and fulfills God's speech. Jesus, the Son of God, is the one who is the master of the universe and is the heir of all things. A series of doxological phrases names the praiseworthy characteristics of Jesus and the congregation would know all the titles that are to praise Jesus.⁴ Jesus is the one who becomes the mouthpiece for God and reveals the full nature of God to humanity.

In verses six through twelve, the author seeks to affirm the divine nature by comparing the role of Jesus to that of the angels. Throughout the Old Testament, angels were seen as messengers of God that were definitely not human, even though they may be disguised as humans. To make the point clear that Jesus was both human and divine, the author describes how the angels surround Jesus. The point is very clear: the angels are the worshippers who gather around Jesus, the one who is to be adored.⁵ Jesus's role is elevated as the writer reminds the readers and listeners that angels are servants of God, fleeting only to exert force and then vaporize and flicker out.⁶ Jesus does not flicker out,

¹Thomas G. Long, "Genesis," *Hebrews: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (John Knox Press; Louisville, KY, 2012), 6.

² Ibid., 8.

³ Ibid., 10.

⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁶ Ibid., 18.

he is eternal and the angels all bow down to him.

Application

As this series focuses on how we know God, it is appropriate we spend some time looking at Jesus, the third person of the Triune God. Out of three persons of the Triune God, Jesus is perhaps the most well known to both Christians and secular culture. Most people can name that Jesus is primary in the Christian faith and can tell you that the cross is tied to this mysterious individual from over two thousand years ago.

Our scripture passage today is cleaning up any misconceptions there may be about Jesus. In a polytheistic world where there was a god for everything, it would have been very easy for Christians to consider Jesus just as a messenger, another form of God to fill a niche. The writer clarifies that Jesus is not an angelic messenger, bright and ephemeral, fading away after his task is complete. Jesus was God incarnate and ruled at the beginning of creation and continues to rule. The writer wants the people to understand that Jesus is God and is to be worshiped and adored. The people are to see this Jesus as the Savior and Lord of their lives.

I think that often it is very easy to think of Jesus as our Savior. He came to earth to teach, heal, and then die on the cross for our sins. He is the one who saves us from eternal damnation and whose death liberated all people. We know about the tender heartfelt experiences we can name when we have cried or been at awe at how Jesus “saved” us from ourselves over two thousand years ago.

Yet I think a harder and more reflective posture to consider is to ask if Christ is our Lord. It can be very easy to say or explain what Jesus means to us as our Savior. When we describe Jesus as Lord though, that turns the tables.

Claiming Christ as our Lord means that we pledge to give our lives to him. As our joining the church liturgy makes clear, we make vows to uphold our commitment to Jesus by our witness, our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service to the church. A good question might be to ask if we are doing that in our lives and acting like the angels who surround Jesus bowing down before him.

A few Sundays ago I saw two people who seemed to grasp that concept well. The local school had just celebrated homecoming. Many of the students of our church were involved, including several who were part of the homecoming court. All week they created floats, went to class, participated in numerous activities, and then on Friday were presented several times. It would have been justifiable for these young women and their families to skip church. Even as a participant, I was a little winded by the end of it.

Yet on that Sunday, two members of the court showed up to serve as the acolyte and the crucifer, with a smile on their tired, yet eager faces. These young women and their families realized that Christ as Lord means something for their lives. Christ as Lord rocks and transforms your world. It means that your witness means something when you show up for church when the rest of the world would have encouraged and been okay with you to take a “self care day.” It means that your prayers are not just to be silent ones to get the new car you want, but showing up to sit in the pews and hear the concerns of those who live next door to you and join with them in intercession. It means showing up with your presence even when you can give your energy to so many different alluring things. It means that using your gifts is not an option as much it is a privilege to lead and share them with the world. It means that you see yourself as someone to serve and not

just be served.

Jesus did come to save us from sin and death. And Jesus also came to be the Lord of our lives, inviting us to follow him and to do so with our witness, our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service. He is calling; will you follow and make him your Lord?

How is Jesus different from the angels we hear in the Bible? How do you understand Jesus as Savior? How do you understand Jesus as Lord? Do you reflect on your membership vows to serve Christ and the church with your witness, your presence, your prayers, your gifts, and your service?

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