



DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

HEBREWS 7

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WHAT IS JESUS DOING NOW?

Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

(Hebrews 7:25 NRSV)

As believers, we celebrate the finished work of Jesus, emphasizing that He initiated and carried out redemption through His incarnation, perfect obedience, sacrificial death, miraculous resurrection, and majestic exaltation. We rejoice that there is nothing we can do to add to the full salvation He purchased for us. It is indeed glorious to meditate on the redemption story carried out in the life of Jesus. However, some have concluded that since His ascension to Heaven, He has taken a break from or even permanently retired from His work on our behalf. That assumption is a huge mistake, for He is still at work:

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him, since he always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25 NRSV).

Contrary to what many Protestants believe, we all need a priest. God designed our approach to Him to be through a representative. The entire sacrificial system as described in the Old Testament is based on this design. In His mercy, God made a way for ordinary people to approach God by calling and designating a certain tribe to be priests. They offered sacrifices that were shadows of and pointed to the final sacrifice of a Perfect Lamb, Jesus Christ. Those priests were imperfect and had to make sacrifices for their own sins, and all of them eventually died. The Ultimate Priest who is the

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substance of previous shadows is perfect and lives forever. None of us can replace or bypass the role of the priest. Someone must represent us before God. Our High Priest not only made the final sacrifice for our sin, He “sympathizes” with us in every test:

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. 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. 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 (Hebrews 4:14-16 ESV).

Jesus feels with us as we face the various tests that life presents. He is not like a doctor who might simply prescribe a medication and hope for the best. He enters our painful circumstance and shares it with us, just as we share His life of exaltation as He sits at the right hand of the Father.

This reality becomes personal and intimate by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus encouraged His disciples as He approached His death and departure. They were fearful because He said He was leaving. They were comfortable with His physical presence

and dreaded the loneliness they might feel without it. He assured them that another Comforter was coming, and that He would make His heart and work real to them. It would be interiorized. They would feel it in the deepest part of their being:

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you (John 16:12-14 ESV).

We sometimes miss what the Holy Spirit is presently doing. He is not only revealing the benefits of Jesus’s work of atonement, but He is also revealing the very heart of Jesus, which is the heart of the Father. Jesus spoke of rest that would come to those who learned His heart:

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30 NRSV).

The complete salvation that Jesus is working into us is so much more than principles and propositions. He is showing us His heart and sharing it with us. As we know His heart, we can trust Him more explicitly. Faith comes more easily when we know the promiser's heart rather than just hearing his or her words. When Jesus self-identifies His own nature, He uses two words: gentle and humble. These would not be the way many Christians would describe Jesus. They might say He was intelligent and powerful or kind and mysterious, but only those who share His heart would know He is, by nature, gentle and humble.

When God the Father revealed His glory to Moses in Exodus 34, He placed him in the safety of the crevice of a rock as His goodness passed by. He self-identified as merciful and gracious—slow to anger and abounding in mercy and faithfulness. The same heart of the Father is expressed in Jesus the Son and is made known to us by the Holy Spirit. We are on a journey of discovery. We find great pockets of need in our own lives and discover that Jesus is eager to intercede for us, bringing us to the throne of grace to find mercy to help in our time of need.

As the Holy Spirit mirrors in us what Jesus is doing as our High Priest, He leads us into truth by convicting

the world's view of reality (see John 16:8-11). He shows that the common intuitive view of sin is a combination of moral failure, transgressing divine boundaries, rebellion, and brokenness. The Spirit shows that Jesus took care of all sin and offers us the grace of full fellowship with the Triune God. Sin is unbelief according to the truth of the gospel. When we look mercy in the face and reject it or neglect it, we are truly sinning. We grieve the Holy Spirit by not receiving what Jesus is offering. He hurts when we unnecessarily hurt because of our unbelief. He also corrects the common view that our righteousness is the basis for receiving our blessings. Jesus finished the work of setting us right with God. He has ascended to ensure that we shall never be rejected. We live in the righteousness of One who has already finished living perfectly and is now in the heavens representing us. Our righteousness is by faith alone. The Spirit shows us the good news about judgment. We need not fear the future. The accuser has been silenced. The prosecutor has no case. In the ultimate Holy of Holies, our High Priest presents us to the Father. The devil does not win. Evil is not stronger than grace. Darkness must give way to light. Death and judgment have already been engaged by our priest. We can live without dread or fear. Paul spoke of this happy condition:

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What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:31-39 NRSV).

Seeing this reality as the Spirit unveils it surely motivates us to approach God's throne of grace with boldness, confident in His mercy. We must be willing to admit that we have nothing to offer - no bargaining chip, no plea for leniency, no deal to make, no merit to claim, no promise to do better - just trusting His heart of mercy. We can be confident that He is eager to receive us because mercy is His nature. He gets to show His true glory when He extends mercy. His sovereignty is easily seen

in creation and in history. His mercy is found in neediness. We can hurry with our lack to His fountain of fullness. He specializes in mercy.

What is Jesus doing now? He is interceding for us so that we can enjoy the whole package of the salvation He purchased. He paid dearly. He wants us to get it all. Primarily, he wants us to know His heart and live in trust with Him.



P.O. Box 2022
Colleyville, TX 76034
(817) 267-9224
Email: Contact@KerygmaVentures.com
www.KerygmaVentures.com