



Bruce Butler

Originally from Oklahoma, I have lived in Southern California for 22 years, serving as pastor of Midway City Friends Church for seven years and Glendora Friends Church for 14 years. Since 2011 I have co-pastored Glendora Friends Church with Judith Shoemaker. I also serve one day a week as a chaplain for Hospice Care of California.

This week's devotionals are based on the seven descriptions of the Son of God as found in Hebrews 1:1-4. The Bible readings are taken from other parts of Hebrews. I encourage you to read and meditate on what the apostolic preacher has to teach, proclaim, and exhort in the entire homily to Hebrew Christians.

BIBLE READING: Hebrews 11:32-12:3

Sometimes it's easy for me to get so bogged down in past defeat and present worries that I forget to look to God's promise of a hopeful future. Are you ever like that? If we aren't careful, we too easily pine away over ancient hurts or get so distracted by current problems that we lose godly perspective that better days are ahead if we just hold on to Jesus with all our might.

In describing the Son as "heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2), the preacher of Hebrews begins at the end which, if you're an inspired biblical writer, is a natural place to begin spiritually. In Scripture God has us looking ahead to his great day—the old covenant day of the Lord through the advent of anointed Messiah, and the new covenant day of the Lord through the triumphant King Jesus. The great homily to Hebrew Christians goes on to suggest to us that Jesus is the heavenly heir because he died an atoning death for us, conquering our three great enemies of life—sin, death, and the devil.

As we share in Christ through faith in his saving work on the cross, we are adopted into God's family, becoming Christ's brother or sister and co-heirs with him of God's glory—becoming like him. That's the amazing truth the preacher of Hebrews imparts to his hearers, knowing that they are being tempted to give up on Jesus and return to old covenant ways.

Sometimes we too are tempted to drift away from Jesus as we are confronted by sin, death, and the devil. God's message to us is this: hold fast, for better days are ahead!

SONG: Rejoice, the Lord Is King

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, bind me like a fetter to your love and hold me tight.

—Bruce Butler

BIBLE READING: Hebrews 4:12-16

I recently celebrated my forty-fifth birthday. It got me thinking that time is not on my side. When we're younger, we can't help but believe that there's plenty of time. We have boundless energy and freedom in creating the life we want to live. But the days pass, and we feel an inextricable pull toward a day of reckoning as time and place encase us in its tightening grip.

The preacher to the Hebrews rightly begins with the end in mind but quickly reminds us that Jesus was there in the beginning in a big way. Jesus is the preexistent God-Beyond-Time who "made the universe" (Hebrews 1:2), or literally "made the times"—heaven and earth, angel and human, place and time. Nothing was out of his scope as he spoke creation into existence then, and nothing is out of his reach and control now. Jesus created our world and us. He came to us as God in the flesh, pulling us forward through diminishing place and time into eternity.

You may still have vim and vigor, or you may feel the ravages of time on your mortal body. You may believe that time is on your side, or you may sense the impending reckoning. No matter your status in the universe, there is a powerful truth for you: Jesus the Son not only made place and time but recreates it and you for his glory. This great truth for the body of Christ explodes upon our time-bound world—that eternal King and kingdom, not temporal time and place, are the reward of faithfulness to Jesus.

SONG: Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Help me look forward to the great day of your return, King Jesus, even as I live now as a child of the King.

—Bruce Butler

Tuesday

November 6

Jesus Is the Radiance of God's Glory

BIBLE READING: Hebrews 5:1-10

I thank the Lord for my spiritual heritage among Evangelical Friends, which formed me as a youngster through hymns like “I’ll Be a Sunbeam”:

Jesus wants me for a sunbeam
To shine for Him each day
In every way try to please Him
At home, at school, at play.

I learned that I had the capacity to reflect the Light of God to my world; indeed, I had the responsibility to share God’s Light with others as I shared my faith in Jesus.

The preacher of the sermon to Hebrew Christians proclaimed that the Son of God was a “sunbeam” of God’s glory. The glory of God in Scripture is often pictured as brilliant light. Not merely reflecting God’s glory as a mirror, Jesus is the actual Light of God, the Glorious God. In saying Jesus is “the radiance of God’s glory” (Hebrews 1:3), the writer means that Jesus is the light source and the outshining of the Divine. As sunshine is to the sun, Jesus is to the Father; he’s one and the same, very God of very God, the radiant glory of the One and Only. At the completion of all things, the Son and the Father are the very Light of Heaven (Revelation 22:3-5).

As Jesus brings you and many other children to God’s glory (Hebrews 2:10), you have the rare opportunity to reflect his glory to the world around you—at home, at school, at play. Let’s imagine together the impact of Christ’s church as we all reflect the Light of Christ to our lost and dying world. Brilliant!

SONG: I’ll Be a Sunbeam

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Invade my dark world, dear Jesus, and expose my need, that I may turn to you and reflect your glory.

—Bruce Butler

BIBLE READING: Hebrews 1:1-4

When my children were much younger, I attempted to draw pictures of their head and shoulders. I thought I did a pretty good job for a rookie artist, but in reality the pictures turned out to be a very poor likeness, even as hard as I tried.

Have you ever visited a museum filled with really wonderful art objects? Nothing can quite compare to the realistic quality of a Rembrandt painting or a Remington sculpture. Yet, even though the subject—person, horse, landscape, still life—may be photo realistic, it is not real.

When the preacher of the homily to the Hebrew Christians proclaims that the Son is “the exact representation of his [God’s] being” (Hebrews 1:3), he uses an idea that we know well: minting. The idea is this: The reality of God is stamped into Jesus. He’s one for one God. He’s mint! Jesus bears the impress of God’s glory, not a mere copy or shadow; Jesus is real and really is God. When Jesus was teaching his disciples, it was important to him that they get this point. He told them that he and his Father are one; that when they’ve seen Jesus, they’ve seen the Father. Jesus perfectly shows us all that we can know about God.

Think on this: the Scriptures tell us that we are being made into Christ’s likeness. So in a way we, too, are being minted for God’s use and glory. What would happen to the world around us if we all lived the Christ-like life?

SONG: O to Be Like Thee!

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, I give you permission to make me and mold me into your likeness for your use.

—Bruce Butler

BIBLE READING: Hebrews 3:1-6

This year I've started going to a gym run by a family in our church. I'm amazed at my progress in being able to lift greater amounts of weight. But I know there's a limit to what I can sustain. This is my reality, and I'm okay with it.

You may remember Atlas, the mythological Greek Titan who supports the heavens. He's commonly pictured straining under the weight of the Earth as it rests on his impressive shoulders. Now that's a lot of weight to sustain, and Atlas often looks very tired.

Our Hebrews preacher tells us that the Son is "sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Hebrews 1:3). The picture of Jesus that we get here is not like the worn out Titan Atlas. Jesus sustains *all* things. *All* is a big concept. Sometimes it's best to describe an idea by what it doesn't encompass: *all* means *all*. Nothing is left out of Jesus' sustaining power. He who made the heavens and the earth sustains them. He sustains the universe. He sustains all matter. He sustains all thought, for that matter—all hopes, all dreams, all information, all emotions, and all memories. And he does it with no effort, so great is his power. Just as he created with his powerful word, Jesus now merely speaks the upholding of all things and it is so. The Son of God is not strained at all, even as he sustains all things by his powerful word—24/7/365.

Jesus tenderly sustains you, and he does it with no bother and no frustration. Our great challenge as the church is to help others rely on Christ's sustaining power.

SONG: Crown Him with Many Crowns

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Sustain me this day,
Lord Jesus, by your powerful word.*

—Bruce Butler

BIBLE READING: Hebrews 9:11-15

One devastating truth has kept me relying on Jesus all my life: my sinfulness. We must all face the brutal fact that sin defiles and must be cleaned up. The gracious reality of life together in Christ's body, the church, is that we all admit to this common struggle and find therein the perfect Purifier for our self-centeredness and rebellion against God. We desperately need Christ and his body.

The good news relayed to us by the preacher of Hebrews is that Jesus "provided purification for sins" (Hebrews 1:3). Our preacher goes on to tell us that Jesus suffered temptation and crucifixion in order to identify perfectly with our own cruel situation. But he remained sinless and perfect in order to qualify as our atoning sacrifice for sin. The preacher tells us that Jesus is not only the Great High Priest who pleads our hopeless cause before a holy God, but that he also offers himself as the very sacrifice for sins needed to satisfy God's justice. Unlike the yearly sacrifice for atonement of sins that the Hebrew Christians had been used to, in Jesus they find a once for all time sacrifice as he makes eternal peace with his Father on the world's behalf. But it gets even better. Jesus is not only our Great High Priest and our Atoning Sacrifice, he's also our greatest Apostle of the faith, pleading his own saving cause to lost humanity through the witness of the Holy Spirit and holy followers.

This is now our job as the body of Christ: to "encourage one another daily, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (Hebrews 3:13).

SONG: Nothing But the Blood

PRAAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, I confess my sin and thank you for forgiveness as I walk in your way this day.

—Bruce Butler

BIBLE READING: Hebrews 10:11-18

To me nothing feels better than sitting down after a long and productive day. We should be able to rest from labors when we are proud of our work, knowing it has accomplished something meaningful, worthwhile, and lasting.

Our preacher to Hebrew Christians tells us that Jesus was seated “at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven” (Hebrews 1:3). There is a three-fold picture presented here. First, the Hebrew Christians lived in a Roman setting where they saw coins minted with the image of the emperor seated on his throne. Jesus is being proclaimed as the true King with his enemies now serving as a footstool, a gutsy move by our author considering how seditious this claim was.

Second, and more important, the prophetic description of the High Priest from Psalm 110 is fulfilled, serving as a strong reminder to God’s people that Jesus is the realization of the old covenant promises while ushering in a new covenant based on Christ’s kingdom reign. This image symbolizes the honor bestowed on Christ Jesus as the heir of God’s glory. He has been exalted above every name, and at the name of Jesus, every knee bows and every tongue confesses him as Lord.

Thirdly, the picture of Jesus being seated signifies that the work of sin’s purification is completed forevermore. Jesus is the Great High Priest who offers a once for all sacrifice, doing away with the need for a priest to stand day after day performing ritual sacrifices for sin.

Best of all, we are now seated with Christ in the heavenly realms, resting with him in his meaningful, worthwhile, and lasting work.

SONG: Near to the Heart of God

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Please show me today, Jesus, how to rest in you as I exercise faith.

—Bruce Butler