

# In Our Time of Need

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The sermon emphasizes the significance of the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ and its importance for Christians in their daily lives.*

**Duration:** 37:58

**Scripture:** Exodus 25:22, Leviticus 16:2, Matthew 6:33, John 14:6, Hebrews 1:1-3, Hebrews 4:14-16

**Topics:** "Time Of Need"

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## Description

The sermon transcript is focused on the concept of Jesus as the great high priest. The speaker emphasizes that in the past, God spoke to people through prophets, but in the present, He speaks to us through His Son, Jesus. Jesus is described as the exact representation of God's being and the one who sustains all things by His powerful word. The speaker also highlights that Jesus, as our high priest, can sympathize with our weaknesses because He was tempted in every way, yet remained without sin. The sermon encourages listeners to approach the throne of grace with confidence, knowing that they can receive mercy and find grace in their time of need.

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## Transcript

I would ask you to turn with me prayerfully this morning to the epistle to the Hebrews in chapter four and we shall read verses 14 to 16 and pray God to make the theme and the message of this section of his word meaningful and relevant to all of us this morning to his glory. Since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet was without sin.

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need. In our time of need. Many of the problems of the Christian community everywhere would shrink to dwarf significance and proportions if only we were better versed in the teaching of our Lord's high priestly ministry.

If we could carry with us into each new day and face the challenge that may come our way in the knowledge that we have at God's right hand a faithful high priest who is pledged to intercede on our behalf and to bring us to glory through all the trials and troubles and vicissitudes of this life, I'm quite sure it would change the whole pattern of our living. Writing to a people whose progress in the Christian life had been sadly retarded, the author of this epistle to the Hebrews here expounds this glorious and enriching theme.

As a matter of fact, it's almost a summary of the message of the whole book.

Now there are two or three things that appear to me we must look at in this passage. First of all, I would like us to look at the prized possession of the church of Jesus Christ. Thinking now of the whole church, not only Knox or some other community of God's people from which some of you good folk come this morning, but the whole church of Jesus Christ has a prized possession which is brought before us in these words.

We have a great high priest and if you're a Christian, if you're a believer in our Lord Jesus Christ, if you're a follower of the Savior, a disciple of Jesus, this by the grace of God is your infinite privilege today. Now let's split it down a little bit, let's analyze it. We have a priest.

A priest is a person divinely appointed to act on men's behalf in things that relate to God. That's not my definition, you'll find it in Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 1. You will also be told in the epistle to the Hebrews that his ultimate purpose is really to bring men to God. In the here and now, to bring men into fellowship with God and in the ultimate sense to bring men into the very presence of God for eternity.

This is the work of the priest. It is to offer the appropriate sacrifices that are necessary to cement fellowship and communion between man and his God, to keep the fellowship sweet and the communion. And of course that is done on the basis of the sacrifices rendered and of the prayers effectually offered.

Now the concept of a priest is universal because the need it represents is universal. So whether you think of pagan religions or of Judaism or of Christianity, in all of them you have this focal point. In all of them you have the concept of priesthood.

The priesthood of Jesus Christ can only be properly understood, worthily understood I believe, against the background of the Old Testament. With its portrayal of the types and of the shadows and of the ministrations of the priesthood there. You will remember that at the very heart of Jewish national life in those early days stood the tent of meeting, the tabernacle, later the temple.

There God met with his people and from that focal point he ruled them. There they prayed and communed with him. There he pardoned their transgressions on the basis of the sacrifices rendered and that was the vital point in the life of the nation.

Now all this was done however in and through the mediation of a priest. Without a priest there was no link between the worshiper and the God they worshipped. He was the lifeline of the nation.

God appointed him to be so and it's no wonder that in Latin the word priest is pontifex, which means a bridge builder. A priest is the bridge between God and man. He unites both.

He brings together the two parties and he becomes, as the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews tells us, he becomes the mediator between God and man and Paul elsewhere tells us the same thing. Now we have a priest. We have a priest.

The innermost shrine in the tabernacle was the Holy of Holies. I'm reminding you of the familiar this morning. And within that sacred enclosure stood the mercy seat overshadowed by the outstretched wings of the cherubim.

And it was there that the Shekinah glory of God shed forth its mystic ray. A light burned day and night indicating that the God of light and the God of glory was right there among his people in the Holy of Holies. Now the ordinary priests were never allowed in there.

They offered the ordinary sacrifices of day to day. But on the great day of atonement there was the high priest. In other respects he was very much similar to the other priests, said that he was the head of the order.

And he assumed the responsibilities and the privileges of being the head of the order. One of them was this. On the great day of atonement coming every year it was he having first offered sacrifices for his own sin.

Then made the appropriate sacrifices for the sin of the whole community. And he took the blood of the sacrifice and moved in behind the curtain of blue as the people watched him with bated breath. And there with a bowl of blood in his hands he went forth to sprinkle the mercy seat.

And then he came out again. And the people knew that since he came out alive the sacrifice had been accepted. Their sins were covered for another year.

They may live in peace with God. We, says the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, have a high priest. Not only the priest that offers these sacrifices for our ordinary little sins.

But the priest was made the one sacrifice that could be taken into heaven itself. And having been accepted has brought an end to all the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. And to the necessity of any sacrifice ever being made by any sinner to be received by God.

We have a high priest who offered himself first a sacrifice and then went in and sprinkled the mercy seat in heaven itself. We have a great high priest. Our high priest is superior to every other.

His greatness none can comprehend. That's part of the message of this great epistle. There is none other like him.

Now if you're not a committed Christian this morning you may think that that is a dogmatic statement that ought to be qualified. The only qualification I will make to it this morning is to read you three verses. As the writer of this epistle comes to introduce our great high priest these are the words he uses.

Listen to them. In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days he has spoken to us by his son whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe.

The son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of the majesty upon high. That's how great he is.

He has actually passed through the heavens into the very dwelling place of deity and taken his seat there at God's right hand. I suggested a few moments ago that the high priest in ancient Israel when he went into the holy of holies once a year did not stay there very long. He would be afraid to.

He went in he performed his task and as quickly as possible he went out again for he was going into the presence of the living God. But our great high priest having passed through the heavens into the very

presence of God is now seated there. He's in the holy of holies in heaven.

He sits at the majesty at the right hand of the majesty upon high. He sits with God in glory. Before the throne of God above we have a strong a perfect plea.

A great high priest whose name is love who ever lives and pleads for me. My name says the writer of the hymn. My name is graven on his hands.

My name is written on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands as my high priest and representative. No tongue can bid me thence depart.

Is Jesus Christ your savior this morning? Is he your master? Is he your lord? Do you worship him? Do you come to God through him? Then my good friend this is your privilege. Live up to it. But now the writer of this epistle to the Hebrews goes on.

He says some things in this passage much outside of this passage but he says at least two very important things in this passage about the perfections of our great high priest. And I want to underscore them and you will see that they have a practical end in view. First of all he has something to say about the sympathy of our great high priest.

You see having read these first few verses from Hebrews chapter 1 and if you and I have really taken in what those words mean we might very well ask what sympathy has a person such as that with people like me. He who bears the cosmos in the hollow of his hand and carries it forward to the goal destined by God. He who is lord of all and who sits at God's right hand.

Now what sympathy has he got with a man or a woman a boy or a girl like me living in my mundane yet very challenging circumstances. We do not have says the writer of the epistle we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. Lurking behind that negative there may well be a veiled suggestion that some of the high priests of ancient Israel were not all that friendly and not all that sympathetic.

Now I'm sure you and I have come across ministers and leaders in Christian church who have not always been as friendly and as sympathetic as we would like them to be. It was the same then and the writer of the epistle is eager to say that our high priest is not one incapable or unwilling to sympathize with our frail human weaknesses. Even if Jewish priests were sympathetic however there were some current pagan ideas abroad about God which which tempted the people to believe that God himself was not interested in them.

I've no time to enlarge upon these but some of you will remember the old stoic ideas about God. They said that his chiefest attribute was apathy which is best interpreted or translated by our English word apathy. By which they meant a remoteness that made him incapable of sympathy and the Epicureans believed something similar and something equally libelous about God and of course there were some Jewish people who presented God in his majesty and his holiness in such a way that the people would be too much afraid to draw near to him.

Add these facts to the existence of an unsympathetic priesthood and you have present all the ingredients that go to the making of despair in those who are sensitive to their personal and domestic needs. Now over against all such groundless labels and lies the inspired writer testifies we do not have a high priest who is incapable of sympathizing with our needs and our problems or rather as we have sung to put it in

the positive in every pang that rends the heart the man of sorrows has a part.

It was necessary that he should be made perfect through sufferings not perfect morally but perfect to fulfill the function of his high priestly ministry and one of the necessary functions is this that he should be able to sympathize with you and me and he is able so to do and that's why we have such glorious hymns in our hymn book what a friend we have in Jesus all our sins and griefs to bear do you remember how how men and women flocked after him in the day of the days of his flesh do you remember how they came to him they did not go to the scribes they did not go after the pharisees you didn't see the crowds at their at their heels but they came to him why because they found in him sympathy they could tell him everything they could open up to him they could open their hearts to him you

see he was different and he's the same as he sits at God's right hand this morning men and women you can be open with him that's one thing but the writer of the epistle also wants to stress his sinlessness we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are yet without sin now this is necessary for a number of reasons the implication of this statement when taken in its context is that contrary to what is commonly believed it is sinlessness not the experience of sin that capacitates us to sympathize with others now you see we tend to believe that in order to have genuine sympathy with someone we've got to have partaken in their sins and so you say well if a man is to help a drunkard it's best to have somebody who has been a drunkard if a man is to sympathize with such and such

a person well let's get one of his kind who has been converted from that there's some measure of truth in that but it's not the whole truth by any means and it can be transformed into a lie it would disqualify our Lord Jesus from sympathy from his sympathetic ministry no no ultimately sin coarsens our spirits and participation in sin means that we are less capable of sympathy or we may get physically alongside people and we may talk to them and we may impart to them such knowledge as we have but sympathy is something infinitely deeper than that and what the writer of the epistle to the hebrews says is this our Lord was tempted in all points and he thus is able to sympathize now you ask the question i know you do how can the sinless sympathize i'm tempted you're tempted how can the sinless

son of God sympathize with me for this reason it is he alone that knows the real power of temptation let me illustrate that there is an illustration to be found there is an analogy between the moral experience of temptation on the one hand and the physical experience of pain on the other here is somebody involved in an accident God forbid that it should happen to any of us today here is someone involved in an accident in an automobile and his legs are crushed and for a long time he writhes in pain or she writhes in pain suddenly there comes a point where he or she becomes unconscious and beyond that point though the pain goes on and on and on he or she is unconscious of it the pain did not end when he or she became unconscious the pain went on there was more of it so it is with us and our

temptations when temptation comes to us and we give in then there are aspects of temptation there is power in temptation that we we don't experience we don't recognize it because we don't stand up to it it is only the person that stands up to temptation to the very end who knows its power and is able to sympathize with those who are tempted let me give you another illustration which brings it out even better perhaps i was once privileged to preach alongside the late archdeacon hw cragg more than once actually but on one occasion i heard him use this illustration he was an anglican minister in the midlands in england and one for one period and he saw this with his own eyes looking out from his study window he said there were two very high chimneys taking the smoke of the foundries up into

the sky now don't let's pass judgment on that for the moment but at any rate there they were polluting the skies two very very high chimneys and the storm broke out and the winds began to blow gale force and they blew and they blew and just a couple of minutes before midnight one of the chimneys crashed but the other one stood erect and went through the night and the wind was blowing and the gale was still massively angry with everybody it would seem the second one stood erect until the storm petered out at 5 30 next morning i can remember mr cragg asking the congregation now you tell me which of those two high chimneys really knew the power of the storm the one that fell at two minutes to midnight or the one that stood upright through the gale and is still standing well the answer is

evident isn't it brothers and sisters our blessed lord jesus christ faced the fury of the gale of temptations unremittingly for over 30 years as a boy as a child as a young man into his manhood he faced the temptations and he did not give way and he still stands he knows what temptation means and out of his grace he is able to sympathize with those that are tempted he knows what you're going through as no one else does we have a great high priest so what and that's my third point this morning some practical requirements for every christian what are we to do then what's the implication what's the application well here it is let us hold firmly to the faith we profess as one and secondly let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to

help in time of need we have such a great high priest one let us hold fast our profession because we have such a high priest we may reasonably and with pride in him hold fast our profession of faith the first century hebrew christians addressed here appear to have become uncertain of the propriety or the wisdom of their having made a decision to break with the old jewish faith it was so picturesque it has such an appeal to the eyes and to the sensual they thought they had done wrong here they are now with following the savior the lord jesus christ who in his in his humanity wore an ordinary simple dress and those around him they were they were dressed so simply there is nothing ornate there is nothing to attract the eye and the liturgy is so very very simple nothing like that of the great

day of atonement or of the great feasts in ancient israel and they thought they were missing something oh writes this great writer of the epistle to the hebrews don't you believe it the glories of our holy religion they he would say rests in the person and in the work and particularly in the high priesthood of our blessed lord jesus christ to know him in the exercise of his sympathy and strength as the occupant of heaven's throne as our high priest to know him thus is to leave oneself without any reason to go back but with every reason to go on listen my friends it is only the people who do not know our savior well that ever think of putting their hands to the plow and turning back those who know him love him they go forth with him they go forward with him they suffer with him they die

with him and they count it a privilege and a pleasure those who know him only those whose knowledge of him is incomplete and inadequate will ever think of turning back says the writer let us hold fast then our profession because of the person he is and then let us draw near now we're coming down you see to the very exigencies of life in which you and i are involved and are going to be involved because we have such a high priest we may confidently draw near to him and to god through him and not only acknowledge our weakness and sins but also receive the help we need in our time of need now this touches the nerve end of our ongoing experience you and i have needs we have personal needs we have needs in the family we have needs of various kinds in all the circles where we turn you are going

to have needs as a congregation what are we going to do about them well there is one place where our very needs can become our greatest blessing if we allow them to bring us to the feet of the christ and the

throne of god if you concentrate on your needs and simply look about upon your needs they can cut out the vision of god and of his grace and of his glory and leave you in the mire just wallowing you and i can do that it is possible for us even though we know all these things if we allowed sin so to blind us we would be left wallowing in the mire but says the writer of this epistle no no that's not the way he says let us draw near to the throne of grace to receive something to receive what well he says we'll need mercy for one thing you see however far we have gone in the christian

life however much we've grown however mature we think we are we sin we sin we trespass we either go beyond the word of god or we come short of it in spirit in word in motive in one way or another we we we trespass we sin and sin requires the mercy of god and so we need my friends you and i are going to need as we need today we need mercy we live by mercy and without the mercy of god you and i are dead in the utmost sense it is only the mercy of god that preserves us but we also need grace grace is more than mercy and it would seem that in this particular context the view is not so much of the grace that comes to the unworthy though that is there the grace that comes to welcome the prodigal home the grace that puts a new robe on him and a ring on his finger that's there but it's more than

that enabling grace grace that capacitates us in the face of our weaknesses that we have confessed to our high priest in the face of the sins that we've had to acknowledge grace that will enable us to arise and stand above the circumstances grace to make us more than conquerors as paul says in all these things romans 8 and he's looked at some horrible things around him and he's mentioned them by name you'll read the end of romans 8 when you go home this morning and yet paul says in the midst of all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us where do we get that kind of grace from or hear from our great high priest he mediates the grace of god to those whom he represents on the throne having first represented them in death and in resurrection now i want to continue

with this thread this evening but for the moment i want to leave it there brothers and sisters the great summons to you and to me this morning is this it's to keep on confessing the christ whom we have embraced it's to be witnesses to him it's to hold fast the profession of our faith concerning the glories of his person and the adequacy of his work and of his promises to his people in every conceivable exigency in life and in death and then to keep on drawing near oh there is nothing impossible for those who keep on drawing near as i conclude my thoughts go back to our lord jesus in john 7 you remember the end of that great feast in jerusalem and this was the last day the great day of the feast and he says if any man thirst let him come unto me let him keep on coming to me that's what he

said and i will give him to drink i'll quench his thirst but listen to this and out of his inner being there shall flow rivers of living water rivers of water i'll give him to drink and then as he goes out to serve me on the basis of what i have given him rivers of blessing will flow out through him brothers and sisters this is the vision and it is possible because our blessed lord jesus is not only exalted as we were seeing a few weeks ago and has been given the name that is above every name but in his exaltation he is our great high priest he's there for us he ministers to his people and he has everything you need and i need to live for him and to die with him and to come to glory with him god grant us god grant us that the vision may entice us that our eyes shall not be downwards or on

the waves or on the enemy unduly but upon him who is able to serve to the uttermost those that come to god through him seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us let us pray approach my soul the mercy seat where jesus answers prayer there humbly fall before his feet for none can perish there and blessed be your holy name none need languish for need of grace at the throne of grace oh our lord and our father

cause your word to become a lamp unto our feet today members of this congregation and those who are uniting with us as our brothers and sisters in christ today each one of us individually and all of us together make this word meaningful and relevant and applicable may we see it as a blank check made out to us and may draw us to the throne that we may draw from the throne those

promises concerning whom jesus is still the amen as well as the alpha and the omega we ask it in jesus name amen

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