

Sometimes we encounter people who go above and beyond what's expected. Say, you go to a sit down restaurant. A waiter is assigned to your table. You expect them to interact with you; listen to your order and then bring all you need to enjoy your meal. If they look after those basics, you're generally satisfied with the service. But one time you have this waitress who is especially friendly. She interacts with everyone at the table and connects even with the young children. She carefully takes down your order and ensures she understands exactly what you're asking. She attends to your table frequently to check if things are alright. She remembers the straw for your drink, the side order of fries and the extra sauce you requested. She is not pushy or dismissive. She is just very competent. So you are inspired to tip her generously because of her exceptional service.

Or say you need to see a doctor. You can't wait for the appointment at your regular doctor. So you go in to a medical clinic. You expect the doctor will hear your concern, ask some clarifying questions and maybe do an examination. Then they hopefully provide the next step. Since the clinic is busy, you understand that they have to move quickly through each appointment in an attempt to get to all the patients. But this day, the doctor comes into the office and takes great care in understanding your situation. They listen carefully. They stop to think when they get new information rather than rattle off a standard answer. They take in your unique condition and questions and thoughtfully address each concern. Though you've gone to a busy medical clinic, you don't feel rushed. It doesn't seem like they want you out the door as quickly as possible. An attitude of care, concern and help just flows out of them. You leave feeling heard and cared for in an extraordinary way.

Or say you're a parent with a school age child. You expect their teachers to know the subject matter, keep control of the class and ensure your child gets the information necessary to learn the material. But then there's this one teacher that your child can't stop talking about. They look forward to their class and can't wait to get started on the projects or homework assigned. Your child finds the class interesting and inspiring. You go to parent teacher interviews to meet this teacher. You soon see why your child has connected with this teacher. They show genuine enthusiasm for the subject matter, your child and the classroom environment. They have great insights on how your child is doing. You leave impressed by their dedication and passion. At the end of the school year, you and your child buy a gift for this teacher and make time to express your deep appreciation for their care and efforts.

When someone goes above and beyond what we expect, and it directly impacts us, we notice. We appreciate it. We hopefully cherish that gift. Well the letter to the Hebrews was written to remind us about a person who went far above and beyond anything any human has ever done. There's no one else like this person. In fact, the entire letter focuses on the absolutely unique Son of God, Jesus Christ. Sometimes we can get so familiar with Jesus that we forget how high above and how far beyond He has gone for us. We can treat Him as common – maybe slightly better than us – but not by much. When that happens, our passion for our faith and Him dies down. So we need these continual reminders of Christ's uniqueness. Then we can cherish Him as a gift and live lives full of enthusiasm because of Him.

Today, we're going to see another way Jesus has gone far above and beyond the norm. Last week, we talked about the role of the high priest in ancient Israel. And we learned why Jesus is the great high priest. The author continues this discussion in the next section. He will review the basic qualifications for any high priest. Then he will show us that Jesus far exceeded these qualifications. I pray that you will see clearly the supremacy of Jesus as the ultimate High Priest. So you will gain courage and enthusiasm for your life and faith because the superior High Priest is on your side for your good. So please find the end of Hebrews 4. We will start in the passage we looked at last week – Hebrews 4:14 and read through to Hebrews 5:10.

This will be our last message on Hebrews, before Easter. The team will resume this study after Easter.

Hebrews 4:14-5:10 (ESV)

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.

5 For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;

⁶ as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
after the order of Melchizedek.”

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus^[a] offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was a son, he

learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The author continues his argument about the nature of Jesus' High Priesthood. To show Jesus' uniqueness, the author first lists several qualifications for a regular high priest. **What are the qualifications of a High Priest?**

He needed to be **Appointed by God** to the position. So notice verse 1 – “For every high priest chosen from among man, is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God.” Or verse 4 – And no one takes this honor (serving as high priest) for himself, but only when called by God just as Aaron was.” Aaron was the less-famous brother of Moses. God appointed Aaron as Israel's first high priest after the Exodus. All the high priests since Aaron had to come from the same tribe of priests. So the high priest's office was a divine appointment not a self-appointment.

The second qualification found in this passage is **Solidarity with the people**. Solidarity is “union or fellowship arising from common responsibilities and interests.”¹ The high priest needed to identify with and be one of the people. We see this in a couple places. Again in verse 1 – For every high priest, *chosen from among men*.” So the high priest comes from among the people. He is one of the people.

But we also see solidarity with the people in the High Priest's ritual role. In verse 1, He acts on behalf of men in relations to God. Verse 3, He offers sacrifice for his own sins as a man; as one of them, just as he does for those of the people. Now we learned last week that the high priest shares priestly duties with other priest. But there was one specific duty that only he carried out. That happened during the Day of Atonement. The High Priest passed through the curtain (or veil). He would enter the Most Holy Place to pray in God's presence once a year. But prior to that moment, he needed to offer sacrifices.

According to Leviticus 16 in the Old Testament, four animals were sacrificed by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement - 2 goats, 1 ram and 1 bull. The high priest offered the bull for his and his family's sins because he was a sinner. The two goats and the ram would be sacrificed for the people. But the goats would be sacrificed in different ways. One would be slaughtered and offered on the altar. The other would live. The high priest laid his hands on this goat symbolizing the transfer of the nation's sins from the high priest to the goat. This goat then became the scapegoat. They would take the goat out into the wilderness and release it. This symbolized

¹ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/solidarity>

removing sins of the nation, far from the people. The High Priest also sacrificed the ram in the ceremony. All of this was done in solidarity with the people. The high priest was a person that came from among them. He was a sinner just like them. So he offered sacrifices for himself and them.

Third, the high priest needed humility in his ministry. We see this in verse 2. “He (the high priest) can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.” The phrase “beset with weakness” portrays a man surrounded by or wrapped in weakness just like a coat wraps around the body. So the high priest needed to recognize and acknowledge his own weakness. From this recognition, he could then deal gently with those who were ignorant or wayward. Ignorant means “lacking knowledge.” So when people who violated God’s law but didn’t know about God’s standard, he would deal gently with them. He would recognize their weakness in not knowing. Therefore, he could gently correct and bring them back. The wayward were those who wandered off the way. Wayward gives the sense of getting lost along the way rather than defiantly going a different way. So when the High Priest remembered his own weakness, he could minister gently to those who didn’t know God’s way or wandered off of it. So the author gives us 3 basic qualifications for High Priest: Appointed by God; Solidarity with the people; Humility in his ministry.

Does Jesus meet the qualifications? Was He Appointed? Yes - Jesus was appointed as both Son and High Priest forever from the line of Melchizedek. Let’s start in verse 5. “So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, *but was appointed by him.*” So we have 2 indicators of appointment by God here. We see the word “appointed” just as we saw in verse 1. But notice also the title the author gives Jesus. So also, Christ. What does the title Christ mean? – The anointed one or Messiah in Hebrew. Well if you were anointed as priest or king in ancient Israel, you did not anoint yourself. So the title Christ implies that someone else anointed him. Someone else poured the oil over, like publicly appointing a person to the role.

But we’re talking about appointment to the high priesthood. So does Jesus meet that qualification? Verse 5 again. He was appointed by him who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” That is a quote from Psalm 2:7. Psalm 2 was widely recognized as a Psalm about the Messiah. In this quote, God speaks to whom He had begotten, of the Son of God. We have met the Son throughout the first four chapters of Hebrews. So this indicates another level of recognition.

So Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one. He is appointed by God. God identified Him as the His Son the Messiah. But has Jesus been appointed to the High Priest’s office? Jesus had one major obstacle in his life

to this appointment. He did not come from Aaron's line. He came from David's line – the line of kings. So how could God appoint Jesus to the high priesthood?

Verse 6 – “As he also says in another place, ‘You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.’” So here's the solution. God appointed Jesus as High Priest forever based on a different priestly line than Aaron. This was the line of someone called Melchizedek. You will hear much more about him in the weeks to come. The author will explain his story and connection especially in chapter 7. So I won't go into detail here. But here in verse 6, the author quotes Psalm 110. This was another Psalm about the Messiah. There God appoints the Messiah to an eternal priesthood from the order of Melchizedek. This served as a prophesy of Jesus' appointment to the High Priest's office forever.

So here we see the first way Jesus goes above and beyond. The ordinary high priest was appointed for a few years of their lives from the line of Aaron. Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one. The begotten Son of God. And God appointed Jesus High Priest forever as the only successor to a priest called Melchizedek.

High Priest Qualification #2 – Solidarity with the people. Does Jesus show solidarity with the people? **Yes, He became one of them and made offerings for his own needs and theirs.** Did Jesus become one of us? Verse 7 – “In the days of his flesh.” The Son became human. Did he make offerings for his own needs and theirs? Verse 7 continued – “Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears.”

The high priest offered sacrifices, the bull, for himself. Jesus offers up prayers and supplications (or requests). He does this passionately with loud cries and tears. Imagine the Lord praying with loud cries and tears. But who did He pray for?

He prayed for Himself because He prayed to the one who could *save him from death.*” According to Verse 7. So it seems that the author refers to Jesus' agonized prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. He sweat drops of blood because of the intense stress. He asked His Father to remove the cup of going to the cross. He didn't need to offer a bull for himself since he never sinned. But He did offer up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears for his soul's agony.

Jesus prayed to “the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.” Except what happened after Gethsemane? Jesus was arrested, tried, crucified and died. So how was his prayer “to be saved from death,” heard? There are two possibilities. God heard the prayer requesting salvation from death and God said “No. Instead I will give you strength to go through death.” Or it could mean

that the Father heard the prayer and answered it by raising Jesus from the dead after the crucifixion. Either way, God ultimately did save Jesus from death. So his prayer was heard.

So Jesus showed solidarity with the people by becoming a person in the flesh and by offering up something for himself – prayer and supplications. But the High Priest also made offerings on behalf of the people. Do we see Jesus offer something on behalf of the people?

Well it's not stated in this passage directly, but it is talked about through the whole letter. What sacrifice did Jesus offer on behalf of the people? Himself and his own blood! Instead of a goat or a ram offered repeatedly for the people's sins, Jesus offered himself once for all. So does Jesus meet the criteria of showing solidarity with the people? Yes. He became a person in his flesh. He offered prayers for himself. He offered Himself for the people.

The third qualification was **humility in his ministry**. Does Jesus meet the qualification of humility marking his ministry? **Yes – He learned obedience through suffering and was made perfect by going to the cross.** The human high priest experienced weakness because of his humanity. So from this weakness, he could deal gently with the ignorant and wayward. But the Son of God wasn't weak. Remember at the beginning of Hebrews the exalted status of the Son? How would such a Son serve with humility? Verse 8 – "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered." This does not mean that Jesus was disobedient and needed to learn how to be obedient. It means that he gained the knowledge of obeying through human suffering. Perhaps the author points out the somewhat unusual nature of this since Jesus was a son. First born sons usually had the greatest privilege and inheritance. They may have had servants or others to endure suffering for them. However, here the exalted Son of God humbles himself to learn obedience through His suffering.

Then in verse 9, we read "And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him." To be made perfect does not mean Jesus had some imperfect moral character that needed pruning and cleansing. Perfect points to a completion of a journey without fault. It's a little like horse jumping. You know those equestrian events where riders take their horses through several jumps. If the horse and rider clear all the jumps without knocking anything down, we say they had a clean or perfect ride. They completed the course without fault. They did not have the experience of perfectly completing that course on that day until they actually did the course. Jesus did not have the experience of going to the cross and accomplishing God's saving work

when He came into the world. But He did go through that experience and completed it perfectly. In that sense, he was made perfect.

By learning obedience as the son and submitting to the perfecting process through His journey, Jesus displays His humility to serves others. How do we know that? Well, why did He endure all of this? The end of verse 9. “He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.” He did this so that people like you and me could actually receive salvation. We don’t receive a brief salvation from a temporary threat. We receive eternal salvation through the source – Jesus Himself. Through this humility and willingness to suffer weakness, Jesus transforms our relationship with God. He reconciles us to God who then deals gently with the ignorant and wayward because of Jesus’ sacrifice.

All this adds up to Jesus going far above and beyond the qualifications for High Priest. Not only was he appointed by God, He was the eternal Son and declared a high priest forever. He showed solidarity with the people by becoming one of them. He offered the sacrifice of prayer for himself as a person. He offered Himself as a sacrifice for the people. He showed humility by learning obedience and submitting to the process of being made perfect.

Christ exceeded all qualifications for high priest to become salvation’s source.

So how might we respond to this? First, if you don’t know Christ, you must **Trust your life to Christ and receive the gift of eternal salvation.** That means you turn away from your own qualifications – your accomplishments; your good works; your efforts; your earnings – instead you trust Christ’s qualifications and Christ Himself. After all, He is the only source of eternal salvation. Verse 9 does not say “He became a source of eternal salvation.” It says, “He became THE source of eternal salvation.” So if you don’t know Christ, you must first put the trust of your life onto Christ. Because of what Christ has done in offering Himself for you on the cross, God will save you. You will become one of His beloved children.

Second, **live our lives with gratitude for all His blessings, mercy and gentleness.** Now it’s been a hard year, with plenty of disturbances and loss. How can we be grateful! One way we can do this is to readjust a perspective. We might have adopted a mindset that hinders our ability to live grateful lives. This perspective is that of the moralist. Basically it says “nothing we get in life is a gift. Everything is earned.” With this perspective, we look at life through the fairness lens. We look at what we have done and what life has brought us. We look at what others have done and what life has brought them. If such a comparison does not measure up to our

standards of fairness, we become bitter. We don't deserve the bad stuff in our lives. They don't deserve the good stuff in their lives.

But the Bible reveals two realities we must keep in perspective. First, goodness will be rewarded and evil will be punished – but not fully until God judges peoples secrets through Christ. Second, everyone deserves condemnation for their sins. We all deserve Hell. Yet, God stepped in a provided His Son. Jesus offered Himself up as the perfect sacrifice so we can receive eternal salvation. One author put it starkly like this. “Everything we experience that is better than hell is a gift of mercy from God.”

Now think about how that perspective could change our outlook on life. Did you get to go for a pleasant drive or walk with this week? That's way better than Hell. Did you have a good day this past week or many good days? Those are great gifts. Did you have clean water and food to eat this past week? Those also are gifts from God. Suddenly we begin to see God's great blessings everywhere. When we remember what we've been saved from.

Third, continue to turn to Jesus as your great High Priest. He sympathizes with our weaknesses. He commands us to draw near to the throne of grace, to receive mercy and find grace for help in time of need. He deals gently with us because He paid for our sin with His own life. He invites us to that intimate walk of faith and guidance under Him. He will give us God's rest – satisfaction in what God has done.

Finally, Join Him in ministry for others. Bring others before Him in prayer. Deal gently with others in recognition of your own weakness. Bring the message of the hope of eternal salvation through Christ to others.

We don't have to wait for rare moments to experience the above and beyond High Priest. He continues to serve in that role today and will forever. We don't get to enjoy His ministry just once in a while, like for that waiter, doctor or teacher. We can approach the throne of grace anytime to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. So let's do that now.