

Hebrews 2:5-18
Jesus, the Pioneer Tim Anderson 11/11/18

Monty Python's life of Brian is not regarded as a spiritual classic. Well OK it pokes fun at Christianity in a very irreverent fashion. Whilst pretending that it's not poking fun by having the main character, Brian, as someone who was mistaken for Jesus, not Jesus himself.

What's the point?

It's got a great scene in it

about appreciating what your rulers have done for you.

The characters are planning to kidnap the Roman's governor's wife, and in return for releasing her

are going to demand an end to Roman occupation.

In support of this plan, one of the characters, Reg, makes the claim that the Roman rulers have never done anything for the Jews.

And what have they ever given us in return?

X: The aqueduct?

R: What?

X: The aqueduct.

R: Oh. Yeah, yeah. They did give us that. Uh, that's true. Yeah.

C: And the sanitation.

L: Oh, yeah, the sanitation, Reg. Remember what the city used to be like?

R: Yeah. All right. I'll grant you the aqueduct and the sanitation are two things that the Romans have done.

M: And the roads.

R: Well, yeah. Obviously the roads. I mean, the roads go without saying, don't they? But apart from the sanitation, the aqueduct, and the roads--

C: Irrigation.

X: Medicine.

C: Huh? Heh? Huh...

C: Education.

C: Ohh...

R: Yeah, yeah. All right. Fair enough.

C: And the wine.

C: Oh, yes. Yeah...

F: Yeah. Yeah, that's something we'd really miss, Reg, if the Romans left.
Huh.

C: Public baths.

L: And it's safe to walk in the streets at night now, Reg.

F: Yeah, they certainly know how to keep order. Let's face it. They're the only ones who could in a place like this.

C: Hehh, heh. Heh heh heh heh heh heh heh.

R: All right, but apart from the sanitation, the medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, a fresh water system, and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us?

X: Brought peace.

R: Oh. Peace? Shut up!

Well the Romans are not our Lords and Masters,
Jesus is.

And in last week's passage,
we appreciated all the things about Jesus
that make him superior to the angels.

Jesus has a superior name,
because he is the Son who inherits the kingdom.

Jesus has superior honour because he is worshipped.

Jesus has superior existence
because he created the world and will recreate the world.

Jesus has a superior calling,
just like the Romans, he rules.

Well nothing like the Romans actually.
Jesus rules forever not just for 700 years.
Jesus rules everything not just the Roman empire.
Jesus rules totally.

But if Jesus is such an awe inspiring ruler,
there's a piece of the puny Monty Python rebel in all of us that says,
"What has he ever done for us?"
And that's where we turn to in Hebrews 2.
What has Jesus done for us?

Four things.

1. In verses 5-9, we discover that Jesus has undone the destructive work of Adam.
2. In verses 10-13, we discover that Jesus brings many sons and daughters to glory.
3. In verses 14-16, we discover that Jesus has destroyed the work of the devil.
4. In verses 17-18, we discover that Jesus has become our merciful high priest.

So Verses 5-9.

Jesus has undone the destructive work of Adam.
Our writer begins with a quote from Psalm 8.
He can't quite remember where the quote comes from,
but he didn't have google, so we'll forgive him.
At least he remembered the quote.
It's a reflection on creation.

"What is mankind that you are mindful of them,
a son of man that you care for him?
You made them a little lower than the angels;
you crowned them with glory and honour

and put everything under their feet."

The psalmist is saying,

"Isn't it wonderful,

that God made us the pinnacle of creation?

Isn't it incredible that when you look at the awesome Great Barrier Reef that you and I are the ones who are made a little lower than the angels?

Isn't it just an incredible privilege to be given the whole world as ours to take care of?

And to be the lords of creation under God."

And the writer to the Hebrews is making a comment about that.

Lords of creation huh?

That's not exactly the position we find ourselves in, is it?

That was the position given to Adam.

But just as often we find ourselves at the mercy of creation, struggling to survive because we can't manage creation,

ravaged by disease,

scorched by the sun,

flooded by rain or starved by its absence,

in peril from storms at sea and hurricanes on land,

and most of all in peril from each other.

Today is the 100th anniversary, the centenary of Armistice Day, the end of WWI.

Is there any other day which it is better to remember that we live in peril from each other.

Lest we forget!

We don't see everything subject to us.

So was the psalmist wrong?

No the psalmist was right.

He looked back to creation

and saw that was how it was for Adam and Eve.

God had put everything under their feet.

And the psalmist looked forward,
and he saw a day when God would once more
make humans the lords of creation.
And what do we see?
We see Jesus.
Made a little lower than the angels as a human being.
But Lord of creation.
Lord of creation in a way that Adam and Eve never were.
Calmed the storm with a word.
Fed five thousand.
And now crowned with glory and honour,
even greater glory and honour than the first humans.
The glory and honour of the one
who conquered death and rose triumphant.

Jesus is our trailblazer.
The word in verse 10 is 'pioneer'.
Adam mucked things up.
But Jesus has made things right again.
And he has done it, not for himself.
But he has done it for humanity.
He did it as our representative.
Like the diggers who gave their lives that we might have liberty,
Jesus gave his life,
that we might be crowned with glory and honour.

And that's the second thing Jesus has done for us.
As well as undoing the destructive work of Adam,
Jesus has brought many sons and daughters to glory.
When we read that,
I guess you like me are inclined to a picture of heaven.
"This train am bound for glory, this train."

And look that's right.
Heaven is where our glory is restored.
But let's stick with this passage.
Where's our glory originally?
It's in creation.
We were made a little lower than the angels
and crowned with glory and honour.
We lost our glory when Adam fell into sin.
But Jesus has restored the glory God gave us in creation.

How did he do it?
In verse 9, he tasted death for everyone.
In verse 10, he was made perfect through what he suffered.
You might ask,
"Wasn't he already perfect?"
Well Yes, he was already sinless,
so in that sense he was perfect, as in without blemish.
But here, perfect means complete.
God's plans reached their completion in Jesus.
He has now done everything the father has for him.
Without wanting to trivialise it,
you might say that a Y12 student is made perfect through their exams.
They have completed their secondary study and there's no more to go.
Jesus was made perfect through suffering.

When Jesus completed the task the Father had given him,
he did it as a representative human,
and so he could take other humans along to share in the benefits.
But why should he?
Why should we share in what he has done?
When Lwendyl makes a chocolate mousse cake,
I can think of a few reasons why I ought to get a slice.

I pay for the ingredients.
I wash the beaters and the mixing bowls.
And I'm her father,
daughter's ought to love their fathers.
I ought to be able to participate in the glories of the mousse cake.
But when Jesus tastes death,
why should I benefit?
Verse 11 tells us,
"Both the one who makes people holy
and those who are made holy
are of the same family.
So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,"
Both Jesus and we are of the same family.
I'm always proud of my kids,
when they don't desert their brother and sisters
when there are friends to play with.
But if ever a brother had a good reason to be ashamed of his siblings,
surely that was Jesus and us.
He could have said,
"I don't want to know those guys.
They bring dishonour on my father."
But he didn't.
He wasn't ashamed of us.
He calls us family.

Which is worth pausing for a moment.
Are we ever ashamed of him?
Don't want to speak up and acknowledge who your Lord is,
when people are getting stuck into the church over the royal commission?
Are we ever ashamed of our brothers and sisters?
Sometimes they, like we, give us reason to be ashamed.
But if Jesus calls them brothers and sisters,

who are we to disown them?

What else has Jesus done for us?

In verses 14-16,

he has destroyed the work of the devil.

As our pioneer, our trailblazer,

the way Jesus helps us is to do things on our behalf.

As Paul's letter to the Romans tells us,

the wages of sin is death.

When humans decided to break free of God's commands,

we saddled ourselves with a very unwelcome companion,

death.

The devil was given the power to dish out the consequences.

He pays us our wages.

And if Jesus was to break the devil's power over us,

he had to become one of us.

And as one of us,

to live the perfect life that the devil had no power over.

And then when he died,

he broke death.

It couldn't hold him.

The devil had no power over him

because he had given no reason why he should be subject to death.

And so he rose.

What does that do for us?

It frees us from our fear of death.

Everyone is afraid to die.

Woody Allen said,

"I'm not afraid to die.

I just don't want to be there when it happens."

Which is a comedian's way of saying he is afraid to die.

But the Christian has no reason to fear death.

And that's because we know we are united to Jesus in his resurrection.
The pioneer, the trailblazer, has gone before us.
And he has shared with us his victory over death, his resurrection.

Here's another point to pause at.
I know that many of those who gave their lives in war feared death.
They didn't want their lives cut short
in a trench in France or a beach in Turkey.
But many felt a freedom in making that sacrifice
because of their faith in the resurrection of Jesus.
I've been to Anzac and Remembrance Day services
where the letters written from the front line have been read out.
And in an era of more widespread faith,
the confidence in the resurrection comes up again and again
as a reason to banish fear of death.
Fear of death which is the devil's great hold over us.

Here's the question for you.
Have you experienced that freedom?
If an important moment came,
could you lay down your life for those you love,
knowing that death has no hold on you?
80% of the men on the Titanic died.
75% of the women on the Titanic survived.
That wasn't because they were better swimmers,
it was because the men banished their fear of death,
and allowed women to go on the lifeboats first.
Would it happen the same today?

One last thing that Jesus has done for us.
He has become a merciful high priest.
What is the job of the high priest?

The priest is someone who stands in the middle.
In the middle between people and God.
He makes sacrifices that turn aside God's anger at sin.
That allows God to relate to us instead of destroying us.
And the priest helps the people to live in a God honouring way.
The Old Testament priests did that by teaching the people God's laws.

There's an old hymn,
Alleluia sing to Jesus.
One of the lines is,
"Thou on earth both priest and victim".
Jesus was the victim, he was the sacrifice.
But Jesus was also the priest.
He presents the sacrifice to the father on behalf of his brothers and sisters.

That's one of the reasons I prefer to be called a minister
rather than a priest.
I don't present any sacrifice to God
that cleanses the sin of my congregation.
It's a damaging false teaching to suggest
that a sacrifice that takes away sins
is being made on the communion table.
Jesus is the only sacrifice that takes away sins.
And Jesus presented that sacrifice to the Father as our high priest.
And his sacrifice was acceptable.

But the other side of a priest's service is directed towards the people.
Verse 18 tells us,
Because he himself suffered when he was tempted,
he is able to help those who are being tempted.
Jesus knows what it's like to experience temptation.
He's been there.

And that's how he can help us.
Through his Spirit living in our hearts,
he can give us strength to resist temptation.

What has Jesus done for us?

Four things.

Jesus has undone the destructive work of Adam.

Jesus brings many sons and daughters to glory.

Jesus has destroyed the work of the devil.

Jesus has become our merciful high priest.

When we come to Jesus in worship,

it's not just his external greatness that makes him worthy.

It's what he's done for us personally.

He's done that at great cost to himself.

Greater love has no man than this,

that he lay down his life for his friends.

Lest we forget.