**God’s Magnificent Son**

**Hebrews 1:1-3 (ESV)**

Dr. Ritch Boerckel

December 25, 2016

***1*** *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,* ***2****but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.* ***3****He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

I love the scene in the book *Prince Caspian,* C. S. Lewis’ fantasy novel about this enchanted land called Narnia. And little Lucy returns to Narnia after a year of being away. Of course in Narnia years, it’s many, many more than one year away. But when she returns, she longs to see this marvelous lion named Aslan. Aslan represents Christ through these stories that C. S. Lewis has written. And she longs to be in the presence of Aslan once again. One evening she hears a voice calling her and she ventures into the woods to investigate. C. S. Lewis writes:

*“A circle of grass, smooth as a lawn, met her eyes, with dark trees dancing all round it. And then - oh joy! For he was there: the huge Lion, shining white in the moonlight, with his huge black shadow underneath him. . .*

*She never stopped to think whether he was a friendly lion or not. She rushed to him. She felt her heart would burst if she lost a moment. And the next thing she knew was that she was kissing him and putting her arms as far round his neck as she could and burying her face in the beautiful rich silkiness of his mane.*

*"Aslan, Aslan. Dear Aslan," sobbed Lucy. "At last."*

*The great beast rolled over on his side so that Lucy fell, half sitting and half lying between his front paws. He bent forward and just touched her nose with his tongue. His warm breath came all round her. She gazed up into the large wise face.*

*"Welcome, child," he said.*

*"Aslan," said Lucy, "you're bigger."*

*"That is because you are older, little one," answered he.*

*"Not because you are?"*

*"I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger."*

*For a time she was so happy that she did not want to speak.*

I love Lewis’ description for two reasons. First, Lewis vividly describes the joy of the Christian in the presence of Jesus. When we are in the presence of Jesus we shed tears of love. We cry with shouts of joy because we see Him for who He truly is. Second, I love this story because Lewis accurately describes the growing perception that a child of God has when they remain in the presence of Christ. In other words, the more that we mature spiritually, the bigger Jesus seems to us.

Of course, Jesus Himself does not actually grow larger. He is the same, yesterday, today and forever. But as we grow in faith, our perception of His majesty grows. As we understand Him more clearly, He seems to us to be greater than He was before. He seems more faithful. He seems more powerful. He seems more capable. He seems more sufficient. He seems more trustworthy. He seems more awesome. Every year we grow spiritually, we will find Him bigger than we perceived before. The principle we learn throughout Scripture is that growing hearts grow in affection, trust and wonder in the greatness of Jesus.

This morning, we open up the Word of God to gaze upon Jesus. It’s our only objective. We simply want to see Jesus. He is the subject of this great Book. While man has many needs, our greatest need is the need to know Him. So, today my goal is to simply preach Jesus. My earnest hope is that God will grow our faith even in this one hour and that we will leave here with a grander, more majestic, more imposing view of Jesus than we had before we came to church this morning. I pray that we leave saying, “Aslan, you’re bigger.”

Hebrews 1:1-3 answers the question, “Who is this Jesus who is born of a virgin?” The text is so full as to make me feel weakened by its weight. I really do feel feeble and inadequate in front of these three simple verses. It’s a passage that we could spend all day, we could indeed have a sermon series a year long and never exhaust the qualities that we begin to see of Jesus Christ as revealed here in Hebrews chapter 1. I cannot think of another passage in all the Bible that more clearly paints this masterpiece of Jesus. So, here this morning, we’re going to look at four specific portraits. The first portrait that this passage reveals about the person of Jesus is

**Portrait #1: Jesus is God’s Final Prophet**

***1*** *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,* ***2****but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son…*

Have you ever thought to yourself, “I wish that God would speak to me directly, would speak to me personally?” Some of you perhaps would think, “God seems so very silent. If God exists, why doesn’t He speak? I wish I could hear His voice.” Well, God’s Wordreminds us that if we ever think like that, it is not because God has been silent. God is not silent. He has spoken and He has spoken boldly. He has spoken loudly to us. If we believe that God has not spoken, it is because we have not been listening. The problem is not on His end; the problem is on ours. From this first verse of Hebrews chapter 1 we learn three remarkable truths about God being a speaking God.

Truth #1: God speaks personally and directly to man.

That’s what the text says.

***1*** *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke…*

This is really remarkable when we begin to consider who God is and who we are. God is infinite. He is grace. He is sufficient. He is a God who has no needs. We offer Him nothing that He needs from us. And we ourselves, by contrast, are just the opposite. We are very small. We are finite. We are insignificant. We have many needs. And to top all of that, we are unrighteous and He is absolutely holy. And yet, God reveals Himself through His Word to be a God who delights to communicate Himself to us. He is a speaking God. This truth in itself demonstrates God’s love and His humility.

We would know nothing of God were God not to speak to us. We would be left to our own imaginations that are corrupted, that are unable to comprehend this incomprehensible God on our own, had God not spoken. And thankfully, we are not left to our own imaginations to wonder, “I wonder what God is like? Let me picture Him in my own mind.” The God that we would create, remarkably, would look a lot like us. And the God of the Bible doesn’t look like us at all. So we cannot rely upon human speculation to discover anything that is true about God. God is not accessible to us apart from His divine communication. We are not able from ourselves to form right opinions or thoughts about God unless God would speak to us. So God in love communicates Himself to us so that we can enter into the joy of His Person. Of who He is in truth. The second truth we learn from this verse is not only that God speaks to us personally and directly, but

Truth #2: God spoke directly to man in the past at many times and in many ways through His prophets.

In other words, God had a means by which to communicate Himself to us. It is a means that He chose in His wisdom. God could have chosen other means. He could have sent angels to speak to us. He could have written about Himself in the stars with great clarity. He could have spoken verbally from the heavens so that we could hear. But God chose this method to communicate with us as a whole by revealing Himself in His message to human messengers, people who He called “prophets,” selected holy men of old. He spoke to these prophets over the course of 1400 years of time.

***1****…many times and in many ways…*

How did He communicate to His prophets? Well again, in varied ways. Sometimes God spoke through visions that He gave to these prophets. Visions like the vision that Ezekiel had. (Ezekiel 1) Sometimes God used dreams like He did with the prophet, Daniel. (Daniel 2) Sometimes God spoke through a burning bush like He did with Moses. (Exodus 3) Sometimes He appeared in human form like He did with Abraham. (Genesis 18) Sometimes He appeared even in a star like He did with the wise men. (Matthew 2)

This communication from God was always powerful and it was always clear. And God saw that His prophets would write His communication down in such a way that it perfectly represented what He told them, the message that He wanted to pass through them to all of mankind. Yet all this communication from God to man through the prophets was still incomplete. It was weak. It was lacking. The prophets could not present God’s message adequately. This brings us to the third truth that this verse communicates.

Truth #3: God speaks finally and completely to man through His Son.

***1*** *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,* ***2****but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son…*

He didn’t rely upon sinful messengers any longer. He had His perfect, righteous, everlasting, all-powerful, divine Son come to earth to speak to us once and for all, clearly. No more partial communication. The fullness of God’s message now comes to us through Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate, He is the complete, He is the final Word that we have from God. This is the Apostle John’s point as he writes his Gospel in John chapter 1. Let’s read a few of those verses.

**John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Why does God call His Son “the Word?” Because His Son is the message itself. He is the communication of God Himself to man. God is triune. There is only one God, but there are three Persons to the Godhead. That’s why the Word (Jesus) was with God. He was the Son, separate from the Father, separate from the Spirit, but He also was God. Singular. One God. It’s a mystery. God is communicating something of His nature to us that we would never have dreamed up or imagined, left to ourselves.

**John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

**John 1:18** No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he [the Word] has made him known.

He has explained Him to us. No word from God is going to come after Jesus to replace Jesus or add to Jesus’ contribution in revealing the fullness of God to us. Jesus is God’s final spoken Word.

Now, a couple of applications to that great truth that this passage teaches us:

1. Friends, let’s listen to God’s revelation of Himself through Jesus.

If we want to know God, we have to listen to His Son. If we lose our focus upon Jesus, ever, especially in reference to discovering what God would have for us, then we will miss God’s voice and we will misunderstand God’s communication of Himself to us.Keep in mind that we have access to the revelation of Jesus through the Word of God. God made His final Word, Jesus, accessible to us as the Holy Spirit moved these prophets to write who Jesus is and what Jesus said and what Jesus did. So all that God speaks to us through Jesus is recorded in His Word. We have no other source to discover what Jesus said and did and who He is, other than the Scripture. Yet we don’t need any other source, because God’s Word, the written Word, is the complete revelation, explanation, description of His living Word, Jesus, His living Son.

Sadly, many look to their imaginations to listen to Jesus. I want to caution you in that regard. Instead of opening God’s Book to discover who Jesus is and what Jesus said, many have chosen to create a Jesus from their own thoughts. Interestingly, when we depart from the Bible’s revelation of Jesus, we end up creating a Jesus that again, thinks like we would think, believes like we would believe, acts like we would act and teaches what we would teach. All that we know of Jesus and all that we need to know of Jesus is found in sacred Scripture. What a gift of the full revelation of God through His Son!

Think of this. No human in all of our history has ever had a more full, more complete, more clear revelation from God than we receive in Jesus Christ. We have more revelation about who God is and what He wants us to do, than Abraham did. We have more revelation from God than Moses did. Who actually was up on Mount Sinai and was in the presence of His glory. We have far more revelation of God than David or Elijah or Isaiah or Daniel, or any other prophets. God has revealed Himself far more clearly to us than any Old Testament saint.

Consider though as you think of that, what they did with the revelation of God. They had less revelation of God, and yet, consider their faith, their life, their choices, their decisions on the basis of God’s revelation to them. Observe that Noah built an ark, Abraham left his family, left his extended family and took his little family to a land that he didn’t even know where it was or how he would arrive there. Moses left all the riches of Egypt in order to follow God. David faced down Goliath. Daniel met the lions. Each one, all because they listened to God and they believed Him. Now here’s the challenge. How much more knowledge have we been given than those Old Testament saints and prophets. God has given us in these last days, His very Son and we all the more have reason to live our lives not by sight, but to live by faith.

I love that story of Jesus appearing in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James and John. I want to read this little section from that because I think this is the application of Hebrews 1 stated so well by the Father.

**Luke 9:33** And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said.

When we see the revelation of God in Jesus, we recognize that this defines the purpose of our life. There’s nothing more to life than this. And if you’ve never come to see Jesus like that, you’ve not come to see Jesus. So if you’ve come to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus, you realize, “This is what life is all about. This is what my present life is about. It’s what my future life is about. It’s never boring. It’s never dull. It’s always full. It’s always complete. It’s always purposeful. It’s always meaningful. It’s full of peace and righteousness and joy.” That’s what happens when we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus. And that’s what was happening to Peter, James and John. “Let’s just stay up on this mountain. We don’t want to go back into that broken world anymore. It’s terrible down there.”

**Luke 9:34-35** As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”

We could have no greater application than to say, “I’m setting my life apart for this one purpose. I want to listen to Jesus. If I listen to Jesus, I will find God in His fullness. And that’s what life is all about.”

2. Let us not yearn for more revelation from God than what He has given to us in His Son.

God does not have any plans for more revelation other than what He has given in His own Son, because none is needed. He sent His Son, the eternal God of very God coming to take on flesh to communicate to us. In fact, any other claims to new revelation only distracts and distorts what we already have in Christ. Did you catch that? This is really important, especially in the evangelical church today. Because there are many who are looking to new forms of revelation. “I want to find out more of God other than what has been revealed through His Son, in God’s Word.”God’s revelation is now final and complete. We shouldn’t expect to have any more. God says, “Settle your thoughts on my Son. I’ve sent My Son. Settle your thoughts there. It’s through Him that you will know Me. It’s through Him that you will find completeness.”

Many leaders in the evangelical church today make claims to hear from God directly. That’s disturbing to me because I’m seeing it happen more and more. And it’s not just sort of these off-shoots that move away from the Scripture. But these are among the people who say, “We believe that the Bible is God’s Word.” Oftentimes, such teachers gain very devoted and loyal followers. The great damage from those claiming to hear from God directly is not that they bear false messages. Though invariably, their messages are not 100% aligned with sacred Scripture. But often what they say they hear directly from God is aligned with Scripture. But the great damage from those claiming to hear from God directly is the loss of the exaltation of Jesus in His church. That’s it!

God established His church for one thing. It is to exalt His Son because His Son is worthy. And it is vital that we not listen to any other revelation other than what we find in Jesus, so that Jesus would be exalted in our midst constantly.

**Portrait #2: Jesus is God’s Magnificent Son**

Why is Jesus God’s final prophet to man? Because He is God of very God. There can be no others after Him. How could you add to what God of very God brings?

***1*** *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,* ***2****but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son…*

Notice there are six amazing statements that God is going to make about Jesus. Let me just read it and then we’ll list these six amazing statements about Jesus’ magnificence, who He is.

*…whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.* ***3****He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power…*

1. Jesus is God’s unique and eternal Son.

2. Jesus is the heir of all things.

3. Jesus created the world and everything in it.

He was in the beginning, before the beginning. And He created this world in power.

4. Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory.

5. Jesus is the exact imprint of God’s divine nature.

6. Jesus upholds all things by the Word of His power.

Apart from Jesus, everything would spin out into chaos. But Jesus is holding all things by the word of His power.

Time doesn’t permit us to unwrap all these astonishing statements about Jesus. But I would encourage you to think of them as a whole for a moment and consider how wonderful, glorious, magnificent and awesome Jesus is! I want to park just a bit on two of those statements because they’re so encouraging.

Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God. Jesus doesn’t just reflect God’s glory like a mirror reflects light. Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory. He radiates God’s glory. No one can fully see God in all of His glory and live. Yet, God reveals His glory to us in this Person, in this Jesus.

In these latter days, God communicates that He is with us and that He is God through Jesus, who “radiates” God’s very glory. The analogy I believe that is being drawn here is the analogy of the glory of the sun and then the glory of the rays that radiate from the sun. Jesus is to the Father as the rays of the sun are to the sun. He is the “radiance of God’s glory.” He is the physical form that allows us to see and understand the glory of God.

Can anyone see the sun without also seeing the rays of the sun or without the rays of the sun to help us see it? The answer isno. No one can see the Father apart from the Son’s radiance. Does the sun ever exist apart from the sunbeams? And the answer isno. The Father never existed apart from the Son. They are co-equal, co-eternal. How can we know that the sun exists?By seeing the light that radiates from the sun. We know the Father only by seeing the light that Jesus produces for us.How can we benefit from the light that the sun generates?By receiving the rays of the sun. That’s the way that we benefit from the sun, by receiving its light. We live in a very dark world and only the light of Jesus will help us to see who God really is. Now some applications.

1. Let us rejoice that God has given us the light of Christ, by which we can see Him.

This is what caused the shepherds and the wise men to rejoice in their day. It’s what causes us to rejoice as well, that God has given us Light. If we’re stumbling around in the darkness saying, “I don’t know who God is and I don’t know what the purpose of my life is, therefore I don’t know how to get from A to B where I find purpose and meaning.” God says, “Well, I’ve given you My Son for that very purpose. So that you’d have Light to see the path, the Light to see who I am.”

2. Let us fall down and worship Jesus who is God of very God.

This is what the wise men did. They saw the star and they said, “We have come to worship Him.” When they entered into Jesus’ house, they fell down and they worshiped Him. (Mathew 2) It is right for us to say, “God, everything I am, I am giving to You because I know that in You is life and it’s through your Son that I find that life.” So, let’s worship Him with all of life. Not just for an hour on a Christmas morning. But with all of our life. Every moment of every day.

**Portrait #3: Jesus is God’s Ultimate Priest**

***3****…After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

The question is asked, why does anyone one need purification for sins? The answer is because everyone of us are corrupted by our own sin. We need purification because we are unclean before God. So then we ask, how exactly did Jesus make purification for sins? The Gospel is very clear. By dying upon a cross as an atoning sacrifice for us, in our place. Who receives this purification from sin? And the answer is, everyone who places their faith in Him. The focus shifts from Jesus communicating God’s glory to us, to now Jesus accomplishing redemption for us. Making it so that we can be clean to approach an infinitely holy God. This God of very Gods who spoke and the worlds came into being, this Godwho upholds the universe by the power of His hand, He took on the weakness of a human body. He suffered on the cross. He bled and He died there in pain and agony. Why? And here’s the answer. To make purification for sins.

Now please notice that Jesus “sat down” when He made purification for sins. What does that mean? Well the Old Testament priests never sat down. They never sat down. You might just jot down Hebrews 10:11-12 to think about later. The Old Testament priests work was never finished. Why? Because their sacrifice was never complete. So they would stand up in the Temple and they would work, work, work, work, offering sacrifices, sacrifices. And then the next day, they’d stand up and they were constantly standing. They were constantly offering sacrifices. But this One, when He made offering for sin, He sat down. Why? To indicate that everything we need in order to be pure, in order to be clean, in order to be forgiven by God, has been provided for us through Jesus. There are two applications. The first is the most obvious.

1. Receive purification for your sin through faith in Jesus.

It’s a horrible thing to be cut off from God and isolated from Him forever and ever. And your sins will do just that. Unless your sins are taken from you, unless your heart is purified and made clean, you could never enter God’s holy heaven. You could never have a relationship with the eternal God. And so receive the purification that Jesus accomplished for you.

2. Be confident that you are 100% clean if you are in Christ.

In other words, for those of you who have been purified by coming to faith in Christ, it’s important for you to live like it. Live like a person who has been washed and is now spotless. You see, there is no worship when guilt and shame and condemnation presses against our soul and crushes us. So what do we do? After we have come to Christ we still sin. What do we do with that? Why shouldn’t we just suffer in our shame and guilt and condemnation for that sin? And the answer is, because Christ has offered purification. And so the answer for us is to constantly run to Christ. Put on Jesus Christ every day. Draw near to God through Christ, knowing it’s only Christ that first of all, can continually cleanse you. But also, can give you the power to overcome the sin that would stain your soul. So run to Christ. Keep Christ ever in view.

**Portrait #4: Jesus is God’s Majestic King**

***3****…After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

Jesus did not merely sit down to rest. Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High to rule. In other words, He’s King of kings. He’s Lord of lords. There is going to be a day when every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. The wise men asked, “Where is he who is born king of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:2) A day is coming when He will return and it is vital for us as believers to ever keep that day in view. It may be today. It may not even be in our lifetimes. But it is a certain day when Jesus is going to return to establish His Kingdom and His righteousness upon the earth.

So the application is simply hope in Christ to fix our world now and in the future. Let’s not hope in human measures in order to fix our broken world. The brokenness is too strong. Sin is, in reference to us, an overwhelming power, an overwhelming force of corruption. We can’t answer the problem of sin and brokenness in our world. Not among the nations, not in our community, not in our families, not even in our own soul. But Jesus can because He is King. He rules in power over sin. His reign in the future is certain and His reign today is offered to us as we seek Him and as we bow before Him.

We cannot do anything more to influence the darkness of our world than first to bow in submission for King Jesus, and then to proclaim Him. That is the calling for us as His people. To bow in submission and then to proclaim Him boldly to a world that desperately needs a King powerful enough to overcome all of the brokenness and corruption. So the ultimate application of this passage is just simply to marvel at the magnificence of Jesus.

I just wanted to set Jesus before you. Do you see Him? And as you see Him, do you understand more why when those wise men entered that little hovel of a house in a cave that they just fell on their faces in adoration? Because Jesus is awesome!

I wish we Christians would reclaim the word “awesome.” We dilute the word “awesome” don’t we? “That pizza was awesome!” “Those blue jeans are awesome!” “Hey, you’re awesome!” No, I’m not. “The sermon is awesome!” Well… (Laughter!) No it’s not. Jesus is awesome! In other words, when we see Him, we can do nothing. We are rendered speechless. I have nothing to say because He is awesome!

*"Welcome, child," Aslan said.*

*"Aslan," said Lucy, "you're bigger."*

*"That is because you are older, little one," answered he.*

*"Not because you are?"*

*"I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger."*

Praise God for that!