

# Nosebleed Christology

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Preacher: Jeff Kriesel

[ 0 : 00 ] Yeah. Well, good morning, Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. I'm excited to be here. To say that a lot has changed since my last time with you would be quite the understatement.

And I'm not just talking about my sweet quarantine beard. A lot has changed. Over the last two months, many of our comforts and conveniences and preferences that we love have been stripped away, or rather they've been chipped away. And we've been left with the things in our life that are the most valuable. For some, you've realized how valuable your families truly are. For others, you've realized how valuable the natural world is, and you hope to continue your outdoor adventures once this quarantine ends. For some, you've realized the value of healthy home-cooked meals. And for others, you've realized just how fragile and how precious life truly is. If this pandemic has taught us anything, it has taught us to appreciate what is truly valuable. Now, have you ever had something that was far more valuable than you realized? Perhaps when you were younger, your parents took you on a vacation. And now that you've put a few years on, you look back on that trip, you realize just how expensive that trip actually was. Or maybe you found a piece of jewelry on a hike, or maybe a gadget, and after washing it off, you realize that it was made of gold or silver, or it was some valuable antique. In 1992, my second grade self loved collecting X-Men cards. In my world, the comic book store was the closest thing to heaven. Every week, I would go to the comic book store, and I would buy a pack of X-Men trading cards. And then I would spend hours just digesting all of the superhero stats on the back of the card. I would memorize them to impress my friends. Don't judge me. Well, one day, I opened up a new pack of X-Men cards, and I found this neat little hologram card of Wolverine. Okay? Well, last year, I was home for Thanksgiving, and I was rummaging through my old room. My parents were trying to clean the house a little bit, and I stumbled across my binders. Yes, binders, plural, of X-Men cards.

And I started flipping through the binders, and I came across this Wolverine hologram card, and I realized that it was still in perfect condition. So, I did something that I never would have thought of doing in second grade. I googled its value, and I came to find out that that one card, which I bought in a pack that cost me \$1.50, is now worth \$125. And it dawned on me that all of this time, I had something that was much more valuable than I initially realized. Well, throughout this quarantine, God has used the book of Hebrews to show me the true value of Jesus, to show me the high cost of our redemption. Now, when you open the book of Hebrews, it's like doing a Google search.

It's like typing in the phrase, how valuable is Jesus? And then when you start to read the book of Hebrews, it's like seeing the answer to that question. Jesus is worth everything. Our passage this morning, it shows us that the work and worth of Jesus is infinitely more valuable than you could ever even begin to realize. And then it explains how understanding this truth will reorder your priorities and just drastically change your life, even in the midst of a hardship or a quarantine, like we're currently experiencing. Now, the book of Hebrews is somewhat of a mystery. We don't know exactly who wrote the book, although there are many theories. And we also don't know exactly who it was written to, although there are many theories for that as well. But we do know this about the book.

It was written during a time of great hardship. It was written to Christians who were facing persecution, who were being marginalized for their faith. And as a result, they were struggling to follow Jesus.

[ 4 : 26 ] They were struggling to see the value of the gospel. And so they were asking the question, is Jesus worth it? They were asking, how valuable is he really? Is he worth the persecution?

Is he worth being marginalized? Is he worth possibly dying for? And the author of Hebrews, throughout this book, he responds with a resounding, yes, he is worth it. He is worth more than everything.

So fix your eyes on Jesus if you are to run the race that God has set before you. So during this pandemic, like these Christians a couple thousand years ago, we need an enduring faith. We need a faith that perseveres. We need a faith that firmly believes that Jesus is worth it. We need a faith that holds tightly to the gospel because it is our most valuable possession.

And with that, I invite you to open your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 to 4. And let's see how valuable Jesus truly is.

[ 5 : 35 ] We'll be looking at Hebrews 1, verses 1 to 4. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. 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.

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.

Having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. So let me open us up in prayer. Gracious and good Heavenly Father, we pray during this difficult time that you would help us fix our eyes on Jesus, our great prophet, priest, and king. The one who died the death that we deserve. The one who has covered all of our sins through his actions. And we pray that we would rest in his work, especially now.

We pray that you would open our eyes, open our ears to hear your truth this morning. And it's through Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. All right. So in these short four verses, the author of Hebrews, he makes some astounding theological claims.

[ 6 : 54 ] Now, what we see in these first four verses is what theologians call nosebleed Christology. Now, when I first moved to Colorado, my two older daughters, they kept getting nosebleeds.

And we soon found out that it was because of the high elevation. Hebrews is like the Colorado of Christology. Okay. The theological claims throughout Hebrews makes Jesus, that the author of Hebrews makes about Jesus, it's meant to kind of shock your system.

It's meant to kind of rattle you and you got to get used to it. He's taking you to such great heights. It's nosebleed Christology. The author, he doesn't waste any time to tell you, to tell me how valuable Jesus truly is.

In the first four verses, the author introduces Jesus as the final and fullest prophet, priest, and king.

As our prophet, Jesus reveals God to us. As our priest, Jesus reconciles us to God.

And as our king, Jesus reigns over us as God. So first, let's first fix our eyes on Jesus, the prophet.

Verse one says, And right off the bat, we are reminded that our God is a speaking God.

[ 8 : 22 ] Our God is a communicating God. He speaks because he is a God who wants to enter into a relationship with us. And so, for thousands of years, he revealed himself through Old Testament prophets, through theophanies, which are manifestations of God, and through signs and wonders.

Now, revelation is how relationships are formed, both human and otherwise. In order to have a deep relationship with a person, you need to know things about that person.

The more you know about them, then the deeper and the more profound and the more fulfilling the relationship. Now, I may want to have the deepest relationship with my wife, but our relationship is somewhat limited by the knowledge that she reveals to me about herself and vice versa.

The more we reveal to one another, the more vulnerable we are, the more that we know. Okay?

And the more we know, the deeper our relationship. You see, knowing her doesn't come through my blind speculation about her, but through her revelation to me about herself.

Now, the same is true with God, but at an infinite scale. Okay? We can't know God through blind speculation, but only through divine revelation.

[ 9 : 45 ] We need a God who speaks, who enters into a relationship with us through revealing himself to us. In other words, it doesn't matter how smart you are or how observant you are.

You can't speculate your way into a relationship with God. He has to reveal himself first. Verse 1 says, In the past, God has spoken to us in various ways.

Now, this word, various ways in Greek, is the word poloutropos. Okay? And it literally means in pieces. Okay? So, the author of Hebrews is saying, in the past, okay, during the Old Testament times, God spoke to us in pieces.

Now, I want you to think of God's revelation like the assembly of a puzzle. Right? It's as if God, throughout the Old Testament, he gave a few puzzle pieces to each of the characters.

Okay? And they were trying to figure out what God was like by looking at these pieces of the puzzle. He gave Noah a few pieces. He gave Abraham some pieces.

[10:50] He gave Moses a whole lot of pieces. He gave David a few pieces. And so on and so forth. And over the course of redemptive history, they have been trying, we have been trying, to piece it all together.

To make sense of who God is. But this text shows us that God revealed himself in Jesus. And the puzzle is now complete.

Okay? He no longer reveals himself in pieces. Verse 2 says, But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. You see, Jesus is, he's the climax of the entire Bible.

He is the fullest and the final revelation of God. In Jesus, the puzzle is complete. Now, I don't know about you, but throughout this pandemic, I have felt confused as to why this is happening.

I've been angry at why this is happening. And I'll be honest, in my heart, I have wanted God to explain himself to me. In reality, what I've wanted is new revelation from God.

[11:59] I've wanted him to tell me why this is happening. Because I struggle to believe that Jesus actually is the fullest and final revelation of God.

I feel like I need more than what Jesus has already given to me. And I know I'm not alone in this. We like to view Christ and his prophetic role as insufficient.

Okay? We struggle to believe that we have everything that we need to know about God in Jesus. The search is over, right?

The puzzle is complete. The author continues in verse 3. He says, Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God. Now, the word radiance also means reflection.

So he's saying when you look at Jesus, it's like looking into a mirror of God himself. Everything about God is reflected in Jesus. His attributes, God's character, his nature, his very being is reflected in Jesus.

[13:01] The author then goes even further and he says, Not only is Jesus the radiance of God, he is the exact imprint of God. This is nosebleed Christology.

This is a claim that Jesus is God incarnate. So, first, in order for us to endure hardship, in order for us to get through these months ahead, we need to fix our eyes on Jesus, the prophet.

In Jesus, the fullness of God has been revealed once and for all. And so, instead of looking for new revelation or finding answers in other means, we are to pay attention to gospel revelation and let Jesus speak truth into our lives.

The second thing I want us to fix our eyes on this morning is Jesus, the great high priest. Verse 3 continues. It says, After making purification for sins.

As our great high priest, Jesus has dealt with our sins fully and finally. And as a result, we have been cleansed perfectly and permanently.

[14:11] In other words, we can stop trying to save ourselves or clean ourselves up because we are already saved and we are already clean through faith in Christ.

Now, this truth is absolutely liberating. This will set you free. This will set you free. Hearing Jesus say from the cross, it is finished. And letting those words sink deep into your heart and soul.

This means that Jesus is the great high priest. This means that we don't have to prove our worth to God in order for him to love us. We can stop working on our spiritual resumes and we can start resting in the finished work of Jesus.

Now, I know this is easier said than done. Last month, our RUF seniors, they graduated from the Air Force Academy. And while every year the graduation is special and I look forward to it, this year I was really excited.

I've poured my heart and soul into these students for three years and I was just really excited about their graduation. Well, part of my excitement wasn't just for the graduation ceremony.

[15:23] It was that three of our cadets had asked me to, at the beginning of the semester, if I would commission them into the Air Force. And I, of course, said yes.

I couldn't wait. This was going to be the highlight of the year to bounce around commissioning ceremony, commissioning ceremony, getting to participate in something so special. But then the coronavirus hit and threw everything into a tailspin.

Now, it hurt not being able to attend their graduation ceremony, but not getting to attend their commissioning ceremonies was a punch to my gut. I so desperately wanted to raise my right hand and recite the oath of office for these cadets.

I wanted to see them proudly wear their service dress, standing a little taller than normal and puffing their chests out a little bit further than normal as their second lieutenant butter bars were placed on their shoulders.

If I'm being honest with you, there's another reason why I was really excited about these commissioning ceremonies. Not only was I looking forward to seeing them in their service dress, but I was really looking forward to wearing my service dress as well.

[16:36] I was excited for my cadets, who had never seen me in uniform, to see all my ribbons and decorations on my chest. I wanted to impress them with what I had done.

I wanted to show off my resume. Now, while missing their commissioning ceremonies was hard, this insight into my prideful heart was even harder.

For me, this quarantine has created an enclosure, right? We're stuck at home, but it has really been more of an exposure of my heart idolatries. If I felt the need to show off my accomplishments to impress my cadets, how much more have I felt the need to show off my accomplishments to impress God?

I realize that I have a tendency to treat the things of this world as my great high priest. I tend to view my ribbon rack on my chest as my great high priest, as the source of my purification, as the thing that says you are worthwhile.

And I know I'm not alone in this. Everyone is looking to something to find worth. Everyone is looking to something to mediate on their behalf.

[17:54] Everyone is looking to something to plead their case before God, to say this person is worthy of salvation. Everyone is looking for something that communicates to other people, and especially God, that we are worthy of love and acceptance.

But here's the thing. When we do this, when we treat anything but Jesus as our great high priest, we are denying the value of Christ's priestly role. We act as if Christ is an insufficient high priest. And my friends, Jesus has already made purification for your sins. Jesus has already washed your sins away forever. You see, if something dirty is going to get clean, something clean has to get dirty, right?

Jesus, our sinless Savior, was perfectly clean, and he dirtied himself to clean us from sin. Because of Jesus, we can take off our ribbons and still stand tall.

Because of Jesus, we can joyfully place our accomplishments at the foot of the cross and not look back. Because of Jesus, we can come to God with his resume instead of our own and actually experience the rest that our great high priest gives.

[19:16] Listen, Christian endurance is really hard, especially during hardship like a quarantine, a pandemic. It's especially difficult when you neglect this truth.

It is difficult to run the long race that God has set before you to run when you're still weighed down by all your sin because you're looking to counterfeit priests to bear it.

But when you fix your eyes on Jesus, who has already made purification for your sins, all the sins that weigh you down are cast aside so that you can run through life unburdened and with joy in your heart.

When you fix your eyes on Jesus, our only high priest, the pressure and the stress to prove yourself is replaced with gospel rest. So fix your eyes on Jesus, the priest.

And third and finally, if we're to survive this difficult time, we need to fix our eyes on Jesus, the king. Jesus is the king of all things.

[20:20] He created the world. He upholds the universe. And he is sitting at the right hand of God on his throne. And he is ruling and he is reigning forever. However, I think that our appreciation of Jesus as the king of the universe is far too small.

If it weren't for Jesus, the universe would cease to exist. If it weren't for Jesus, everything would collapse. If he were to take his hand off of creation for even a moment.

You see, Jesus is the source. He's the sustainer and he is the goal of created reality. He is the king. I love it that the author of Hebrews, he won't let us get away with a shallow Christology, with a shallow Christianity.

He wants us to see Jesus as the king of the universe. From the start and all throughout this book, the author desires to press into our head and our hearts the infinite value of Jesus that we often overlook.

Right? I once heard Tim Keller give this illustration and it has stuck with me ever since. He said, If the length between the earth and the sun was measured as a single piece of paper, the distance between the earth and the next nearest star would be a stack of paper 75 feet high.

[ 21 : 46 ] And then he takes it even further. He says, Now, the distance between the earth and the edge of the galaxy would be a stack of paper 310 miles high.

And our galaxy is just a speck in this universe. A universe that Jesus holds together millisecond by millisecond by the word of his power.

Now that, my friends, is a king. Does that sound like someone that you would casually invite into your life to be your personal assistant or your traveling companion?

No, you can't hire the king of the universe to be your personal assistant. Right? We need a much bigger view of Jesus as the king if we hope to have an enduring faith in the midst of hardship.

We have to see Jesus as the one who is sovereign and in control, the one who is good, the one who is reigning on his throne forever. So in closing, let me ask you again.

[ 22 : 47 ] Have you ever had something that was far more valuable than you realized? Now, if you're a Christian, the only answer is a resounding yes.

Jesus is worth everything. He is the invaluable gift of God. He is our treasure and our great reward. He is our cup that never runs dry.

He is our great shepherd who will never leave us or forsake us. And he is our joy and our hope in the midst of hardship. So if we are to endure hardship, the first and only thing that we need to do is fix our eyes on the prophet, the priest, and the king.

To see Jesus as the most valuable thing that we hold in our hearts. Amen. Now, at this time, I'll offer the benediction.

So I invite you to raise your hands from home and participate with me. Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

[ 24 : 06 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.