

We See Jesus (1): Singing the New Old Song

(Hebrews 1:1-4)

I. Introduction

- A. I liked this recent headline on a Lifeway.com— “*Pastors Are Not Quitting in Droves*”
1. That is counter to the prevailing wisdom that more people leave ministry than enter it
 - a. That may be true in some circles; Lifeway wanted to see if it was true in their circle
 - b. They sent extensive surveys to 1500 evangelical and historically black churches
 2. Results indicate 250 pastors are leaving the ministry each month—not insignificant
 - a. The number that had been thrown out was 1500-1700 were leaving each month!
 - b. Their survey indicate pastors are hurting in a variety of ways, but hanging in there
 3. **Conclusions:** “*Pastors Aren’t Quitters*” and “*Ministry is Tough, So Are Ministers*”
- B. Leonard Allen recently sent this across my twitter feed and it got me thinking—
The greatest risk of ministry isn’t really burnout. It is cynicism: the loss of faith in the true meaningfulness of the work that ministers do.
1. I don’t think there’s a time in 37 years I’ve come close to burn-out (*rust-out maybe*)
 - a. Sure, there’s aggravation & frustration (*I’ve done my share of annoying/frustrating*)
 - b. But there’ve been many times when I’ve wondering if what I do makes a difference
 - c. There nothing than a preacher whose cynical or jaded—start going thru motions
 - 1) Noah teaches us about preachers— *if you want results, then stick to carpentry*
 - 2) Noah preached for 120 without any responses... did a great job as a carpenter
 - 3) One preacher became a carpenter, “*At the end of day, the nails stay hammered*”
 2. Allen also suggests that becoming cynical is a problem for people sitting in the pew
 - a. How many sermons have you heard? How many times have eaten communion?
 - 1) How many songs have sung in church? How many prayers have you prayed?
 - 2) If doing church would fix problems of your soul, why aren’t they fixed yet?
 - b. Does it ever feel like we’re just going through the motions or just playing church?
 - 1) Are things so familiar & ordinary, the LAST thing we’d expect is extraordinary
 - 2) Are things so decent-and-in-order, the LAST we’d expect is to encounter God?
 3. Then there’s a church envy thing going on. We wish Denbigh was more like the...
 - a. ... *old church we grew up in*. Sang old songs from the old books with old KJV
 - b. ... *big church we use to go to*. More programs offering more things. Coffee bar!
 - c. ... *next church we’re moving to*. If we just find perfect church, it will all be right!

- C. **Question:** Is greatest danger most of us face **total apostasy** or **growing lukewarm**?
1. Isn't it that we will go through the motions without really reflecting on its meaning?
 - a. Isn't it that we still hear the music, but we're no longer really moved by the song.
 - b. Magic is replaced by the mundane. Or as Jesus puts it, "*We've left our first love*"
 2. Think about that one song that really captured you. *What was it? When was it?*
 - a. For me that song was and is "*You Are God Alone*" by Phillips, Craig and Dean
 - b. We first heard it when going thru a difficult time; it spoke in ways nothing else did
 - 1) Song still has power; I heard them in person, that song literally brought tears!
 - 2) Music captures us in ways other things can't...in a ways that we can't explain
 3. But sometimes our favorite songs get old. They're just not fun to sing anymore
 - a. Sometimes the old songs get tired and worn out... and start to sound, well, old.
 - b. The lyrics are lame, the tune is tired—what do you do when can't sing the song?
- D. For some of us here today, church is that old song that's tired and worn from the singing
1. Many have left the church; fastest growing church today is the "*Church of Nones*"
 - a. That's the people who check "none" when asked "*What church do you attend*"
 - b. But most of these people used to attend a church—but they got tired and left it
 2. Many who didn't actually leave are tired; didn't DROP-OUT but have CHECKED-OUT
 - a. They stay due to relationships or habit or because they don't know anything else.
 - b. They're tired. They have what Hebrews calls "*feeble arms and weak knees*" (**12:12**)
- E. And that, finally, brings us to the book of Hebrews—our study series for the summer
1. Book was written to a Jewish church in Jewish community surrounded by pagans
 - a. There were isolated because of their faith in Jesus and their identity as a church
 - b. It would have been much easier if they could have gone back to the lives they left
 - c. The book is about discouragement and happens when the world beats on your faith
 2. *Isn't Hebrews about the OT vs NT?* Well, that is the context of their discouragement!
 - a. We'll talk about, but the point is discouragement; it's about pressure from the world
 - 1) Ever feel pressure to conform to the world around you to make faith easy?
 - 2) Ever discouraged, worn-out or bored with faith? Hebrews is book for you
 - b. Hebrews helps us to recapture the glory of old song become worn from the singing
 - c. Book begins by singing! We need to be reminded of who's at center of our story.
 3. Many scholars see the opening of Hebrews as a song; we need to hear music again!

II. Singing a New Old Song (Reading: [Hebrews 1:1-4](#))

- A. The word “*better*” appears 13 times in this book; it serves as a key to understanding book.
1. First time is here ([4](#)); Jesus is “*better*” (KJV/NET) or “*superior*” (NIV/ESV) to the angels
 2. Basic argument of book is that Jesus is better or superior to Old Testament system:
 - a. He gives a better hope ([7:19](#)), has better covenant ([7:22](#)) with better promises ([8:6](#))
 - b. Jesus is a better priest ([8:6](#)) and better sacrifice ([9:23](#)) than those in Old Testament.
 3. The first readers of this book were tempted to leave the church to return to synagogue
 - a. They were tired; the pressured of the world were great and the synagogue was easier
 - b. So they needed to be reminded about the power and person that is Jesus Christ.
 - 1) So the writer either composes a praise song or likely uses one already written.
 - 2) Music can have more impact than argument; poetry more power than prose.
- B. Later he will argue, but he begins with the music. *What does song tell us about Christ?*
1. **First**, Jesus is the final revelation of God—the word made flesh ([Heb 1:2](#))
 - a. The prophets spoke the word of God, but Jesus is the word of God ([John 1:1](#)).
 - b. Jesus was the word made flesh; Christ is the final revelation of God’s word to us
 2. **Second**, it was also through Jesus that God created the cosmos ([Heb 1:2b](#))
 - a. Babe of Bethlehem is human form of One who created all thing ([Jn 1:3, Col 1:16](#)).
 - b. Wait a minute; that doesn’t make sense! How can infinite creator become finite?
 - 1) The second you think this it makes total sense, you need to read (sing) it again!
 - 2) Mary held God in her arms; she’d later teach God about how He created world!
 3. **Third**, Jesus is radiance of God’s glory and exact representation of God ([Heb 1:3a](#))
 - a. Later he will stress the humanity of Christ (“*tempted in every way just as we are*”).
 - b. Refers to a die/stencil that stamps exact replica, “*when you’ve seen me*” ([Jn 14:9](#))
 - c. Paul also stresses that Christ was in every way just like God Himself ([Col 1:15](#))
 4. **Fourth**, He didn’t not just create; he also sustains ([1:3b](#)) *Not a one-time static event*
 - a. If somehow Christ become distracted by some angels, cosmos would come apart!
 - b. Jacob’s expression for doing well, “*I’m sticking together.*” Christ’s job! ([Col 1:17](#))
 5. **Finally**, Jesus reigns with God. One who died for us now reigns over all ([Heb 1:3c](#))
 - a. The cross was meant to be the end of the story of obscure rabbi from Nazareth.
 - b. But Jesus was raised from the and is now he has been exalted to throne of heaven.
- C. That’s the song, I’m not sure what the tune was! (Sounded lot like “*You Are God Alone*”)

III. Conclusion

- A. How hard the world for this little church of the Hebrews. Had no power or influence
1. It would be so much easier if they could just blend in to their world like chameleon
 - a. We know the feeling right? Sometimes we know that feeling too well, don't we?
 - b. Some days, we want to blend in. We "*go along to get along.*" Just play it safe.
 2. So the writer begins with this majestic song of the glory and majesty of the Christ.
 - a. We need to get a renewed glimpse of the One with whom were dealing here.
 - 1) There is no half-way; either we believe that Jesus is this Christ or He isn't
 - 2) He can't be Christ on Sunday and then make no demands the rest of week
 - b. He is Jesus Messiah— name above all names; blessed Redeemer, Immanuel!
- B. Here's where we must begin when we feel discouraged or jaded or cynical or bored!
1. We don't need a new program, new slogan or new system; we need to see Jesus!
 - a. Going to church? Doing good deeds? Living a moral life? Christian fellowship?
 - b. These can become pedestrian & mundane unless connected to something that isn't!
 - c. That something is and always will be Jesus Christ. We need to focus on Christ
 2. That's how Hebrews begins and continues—fix your eyes on Jesus (**Heb 12:1b-2**)
 - a. Tired of the grind that can become "*doing church?*" *Fix your eyes on Jesus!*
 - b. Is it getting harder to do the right and moral thing? *Fix your eyes on Jesus!*
 - c. Other believers starting to get on your last nerve? *Fix your eyes on Jesus!*
 - d. Are you fighting a hard world that doesn't make sense? *Fix your eyes on Jesus!*
 - e. Are you struggling with feeble arms and weak knees? *Fix your eyes on Jesus!*
 3. In a moment, we'll sing a song as a time of encouragement and reflection
 - a. Elders will be at the back if you have prayer requests or needs; meet them there
 - b. If you need to meet Jesus at the cross to have his blood cover you, this is your time
- C. The problem in the book of Hebrews is our problem today—they're tired (**Heb 12:12-13**)
1. The way they were to do that was to keep their focus on the person of Jesus Christ
 - a. Feeble arms needed to stay raised in the worship of Jesus Christ
 - b. Feeble knees needed to stay bowed in prayer through Jesus Christ!
 2. Only when we see the glory and majesty of Christ that we can fully sing the song.
 - a. May we ever take a fresh look at Jesus to see the glory and majesty that is the Christ
 - b. And at those times when we are discouraged & bored, may we see Jesus... and sing!