

Hebrews 1:1-9

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. ⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? ⁶ And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." ⁷ In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." ⁸ But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

The unapproachable has been made approachable.

- 1. Jesus is the radiance of God's Glory.**
- 2. Jesus is God's Son who comes in humility.**

In a tiny yet excited voice, the little girl asks her mother, "Can I go see the baby?" and the mother gladly honors her daughter's request. The two go hand and in hand to gush and adore. There is no fear, but only wonder and excitement. Eyes wide, heart melting with joy and happiness, they approach the child and the father holding the baby beams, "This is my Son!" And he is glad to let the little girl see the child. For a moment everyone is silent and all smiles and then the little girl, still looking at the baby, starts asking one question after another. She wants to know more. She wants to just soak it all up.

God wants us to come near to him without fear. He wants us to see his Son. He wants us to know his Son. He wants us to learn more, to soak it all in. And so he sends his son in gentleness and he comes in humility. He comes as a baby

wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. He comes in this way that makes the unapproachable very approachable.

Consider the alternative for a few moments. How could we ever hope to approach the God who created the universe? After all, God's Son is the radiance of God's glory!

Have you ever met someone famous, or even relatively famous? Most people have a tendency to freeze up in situations like that. A friend of mine recently got to meet a childhood hero and he talked about how nervous he was to meet this former baseball player. After all these years, even as a grown man he was afraid and so hesitant and nervous to approach this athlete. He was so nervous he almost thought about passing up the chance, but he was able to meet and greet this childhood hero. And as he told the story you could tell that he enjoyed every moment of that visit.

Now, consider this description of our Lord in these verses from the book of Hebrews. ³ ***The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.*** This is someone far greater than a retired baseball player. This is someone greater than a big time celebrity. This is a being which is far superior and far more powerful than any world leader who has ever lived. This is the God who made the universe. This is the one who currently sits in glorious splendor, and rules with unmatched power, and sustains all things by his almighty word. This is the one, whom the angels themselves worship and adore. This is the one who is far superior even to the angels.

For the sake of comparison, or a reference point, consider how the shepherds were absolutely terrified when they saw the angel who announced the Savior's birth. Consider how those guards at the tomb reacted on Easter morning when an angel of the Lord rolled the stone away. The bible tells us that those big, tough, Roman soldiers were so afraid of the angel that ***they shook and became like dead men*** (Matthew 28:4). And so if this is how people react to angels how could we ever approach our God and Savior? We are sinners and he is the perfect God of heaven and earth. He is the holy God and we are so terribly impure in thought and word and deed. He is the eternal and powerful creator, and we are but weak and temporary creatures. He is filled with perfect righteousness and we are filled with the very wickedness that he detests. How could we ever stand before such a holy, perfect, and powerful being? We couldn't! With the psalmist we must confess. ³ ***If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?*** ⁴ ***But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.***

And so our powerful God - who is also so rich in forgiveness and mercy, love and compassion and wisdom - when our God sent his son into this world he did it

in a way that would demonstrate his power and majesty. But he also did it in a way that would convey how much he wants us to know and be near to him. And so he came near to us. The holy approached the unholy. The skies lit up with the epic and terrifying scene of the angel hosts, but God's Son was found in a lowly manger bed. A child, a baby boy, and the shepherds without fear gladly approached and knelt before their Lord. They had known the Word and they had heard the promises of God. They had held onto the words of the prophets. But now they were able to see the Word made flesh. They heard the voice of God's own Son pierce the silent night with his infant cry. Those who had held onto the words of the prophets had perhaps even held the fulfillment of those promises in their own arms. Without fear, with simple awe and reverence, joy and wonder, they worshipped and adored their Lord and God. The unapproachable had become so wonderfully approachable, because God came near to us.

The human flesh is hesitant, it is skeptical, it often struggles with doubts and fears when approaching the divine, and the devil wants nothing more for us to pass up on getting to know our God. We are pushed away from knowing our God either by that despair that says, "God would never want a person like me in his holy presence," or that doubt that says, "How could a child born in such humility do anything to help me, let alone, save me?"

My friends this is mystery the majesty of the incarnation. The God who created the universe took on a lowly form to help you in your greatest need. The God of the prophets who parted the sea and stopped the sun in the sky, and made fire rain down from heaven, and who now reigns over all things both presently and for all eternity, that same God came down to earth as a baby to live under the law for you. The holy Son of God came to provide purification for your sins. This is the one the angels adore in the glory of heaven and the one whose humble birth on earth the angels announced.

And this was all done so that we might know him. This unthinkable mystery, the Word becomes flesh, so that he might make known the unsearchable goodness and love of our God. The one who seemed so unapproachable was made so very approachable. This is how badly God wanted to have a relationship with you; God became flesh and made his dwelling among us. He came to take away our sin, our fear, our trepidation. He came to make the guilty pure, the filthy clean, the unworthy worthy. Jesus became our brother to help us. Jesus became our brother so that we could approach our Father with confidence. God came to this world as one of us. He spoke of God's message of salvation. He speaks to us words of compassion and love. His words jump off the page and into our hearts and they set us free to live in joy and at peace, for he tells us, he shows us that we have been made right with God.

But even though the holy God has come to us in such an approachable way, there are many who are still so hesitant to approach our God. There are those who cannot bring themselves to pray to Jesus or God, because they see themselves as unworthy; and so deceived by their own conscience and the lies of false teaching they pray to Mary or a saint or even an angel. There are those who are so racked with sin and guilt that they think that God would never take them back. There are those who see God only as righteous judge and are terrified of the punishment that they deserve. There are those who consider God this being that is so far away that he doesn't care one bit about us here on this earth. And each one of us may find ourselves falling into similar pitfalls.

The words of the angel touch our hearts, "Do not be afraid." Come and see this thing which the Lord has done. And so with eager hearts we go and see this baby. Eyes wide, hearts melting with joy and happiness, we approach without fear. And the Father beams, "This is my Son, listen to him!" And we draw even closer and we learn more about this child. We learn that he is both the king of the universe and our humble Savior. We learn that he is the judge of all but that he took on flesh to save us. We learn that because he has approached us in grace and mercy we can approach our God and Father with confidence. He speaks to us through Word and he invites us to speak directly to him and to our Father in heaven. He is the almighty and powerful God who controls all things and he is our brother, born into this world to help and to save us.

Later on in the book of Hebrews the author writes, ¹⁴ *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.* ¹⁵ *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.* ¹⁶ *Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* The unapproachable has become so very approachable, because God came near to us. And so with eyes of faith we stare down in the manger and marvel at the mystery of the incarnation. This child that we draw near to this day, this is the very Son of God; this is the one whom angels serve and adore. And this is also our brother who came to help us in our time of need.

The Lord of heaven approaches you in humility so that we may approach him without fear. Come and marvel at the baby born in Bethlehem. The eternal God takes on flesh for you. Amen.