

The Final Word on Confidence

1. Intro

- In the movie The Castle, Darryl Kerrigan is a blue collar worker who loves his family and his home
 - Despite his home being built on a toxic landfill, beneath power lines, and directly adjacent to an airport runway Darryl believes that he lives in the lap of luxury
- One day, a property valuer arrives to inspect the house and a few weeks later, he receives a letter informing him of the compulsory acquisition of his house for a paltry A\$70,000
- Convinced that the government can't evict him unwillingly from his treasured home, Darryl attempts to fight the eviction and so hires the local lawyer Dennis Denuto
 - Dennis is a small time suburban lawyer who completely disorganised and totally incompetent for the job
 - In court, the only point Dennis could come up with to save Darryl's home was that eviction goes against "the vibe" of the Constitution
- It quickly becomes obvious that Dennis Denuto was nowhere near qualified to be representing the Kerrigans in court and gave no confidence whatsoever that he's help them win their case before the judge

- But as luck would have it ... Darryl bumps into a man called Lawrence Hammill outside the court room who just happens to be a QC – a top ranking barrister ... and Hammill offers to take on Darryl's case and represent the Kerrigans in court
 - Not only was Hammill a QC ... but he also specialised in Land and Environmental Law
 - So he was supremely qualified to take the represent Darryl before the judge

- As you watch the film you feel completely confident that Lawrence Hammill QC is going to win the case ... which is does
- You see ... it makes a difference when the person who's representing you before a higher authority is qualified for the job
 - The better the qualifications ... the greater the confidence you have in them

2. Context

- The passage we were looking at last week ended with the reminder of the power of God's word to penetrate like a double edged sword to judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart
 - In doing so it exposes the hearts and minds of everyone ...
 - Which is a is a frightening thought when we know one day have to stand before God to give an account of our lives
- For the person who's conscious of their sin and the many ways they fail to love God and love others ... this truth would be quite despairing
- When it comes to having someone represent us before God ...
 - We don't want a Dennis Denuto
 - We want a Lawrence Hammill QC
- The writer of Hebrews knows this
 - He wants to reassure his readers that the reality of God's judgment doesn't mean they need to despair
 - And reason they don't need to despair is because they have someone who's fully qualified to represent them before God
 - And that's Jesus ... who is our great high priest
- So far throughout the letter he's focused on explaining and proving from the OT that Jesus is the Son of God

- And therefore he's supremely qualified to bring us salvation and eternal rest
- Now he begins to explain the significance of Jesus being our perfect high priest
 - And as our perfect high priest ... he's supremely qualified to deal with our sin before God

3. Jesus our merciful high priest

- For some the idea of priesthood and sacrifices would be seen as something primitive, unscientific and superstitious
 - Think Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom
- For others it'll conjure images of Catholic or Orthodox priests dressed in ornate clothing performing odd rituals at the front of church

- The function of priesthood and sacrifices may seem odd and far removed from what we're used to ...
 - However it's important we understand the OT idea of priesthood if we're going to fully understand what the writer of Hebrews is trying to teach us about Jesus

- The OT priesthood and sacrificial system was something given by God to the Israelites
 - As part of the OT law God provided them with instructions for the appointment of priests and a sacrificial system that was designed as a way of maintaining fellowship with him by moving the people to repentance of their sin
- There were various types of sacrifices and offerings the Israelites could make
 - For each of them the sacrifice or offering had to be brought to the tabernacle or temple and given to the priest who would make the offering or sacrifice

- The most significant role of the High Priest came once a year on the Day of Atonement when he was to offer sacrifices to atone for the sins of Israel
 - Part of that ritual included going behind the curtain into the inner most room of the tabernacle or temple call the Most Holy Place / Holy of Holies
 - This was the place where God symbolically dwelt among the ppl
 - Curtain was there to separate God (who is holy) from the ppl (who are sinful)
 - So the High Priest would go through the curtain to offer blood from the animal sacrifice as an atonement for the sin of the people

- Here in Hebrews 4:14 our writer says that this Jesus ...
 - Is also our **great** high priest
 - For he's done more that go through the curtain into the presence of God ...
 - He's gone through the **heavens** into the presence of God
 - And of course Jesus wasn't offering the blood of animal sacrifices to atone for the sin of the ppl
 - He was offering the blood of his own body to atone for the sins of the ppl

- Jesus is able to act as a mediator and representative for us before God in a far more effective way than the OT high priest
 - Not only does his death truly atone for sin
 - But also he's no mere mortal ... he is the Son of God

- Because Jesus came to earth, became fully human, experienced the suffering, pain and temptation we do ...
 - He's therefore able to sympathise with us in our weaknesses
 - It's not sympathy from a distance
 - he shared our humanity
 - he knows what it's like

- he knows human hardship, suffering, weakness and temptation
- And so we have a high priest who has been tempted in every way just as we are ... but crucially was without sin

- Now you could say ...
 - “Well if he didn’t sin, then he didn’t know what it’s like to sin”
- That’s right
- But he does know what it is like to **fight** sin
 - And he knows what it’s like to fight sin ... because he did it to the end
 - He knows how hard it is to fight sin
 - He knows far more about that than we ever will

- Illustration – CS Lewis
 - *“... Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it (temptation) is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. [...] We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means”*
- Jesus knows what it’s like living in this world battling the realities of temptation, struggling against sin ... he knows more about that than we ever will

- Because of all this ... our writer says to these Hebrew Christians
 - v16 – *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*
- In other words ...
 - You don’t need to despair at your sin and failures ...

- Because Jesus has fully atoned for your sin and is acting as your intermediary with our Father in Heaven ...
- You can come before God with confidence knowing he will show you mercy and grace

- **Application**
- **Temptation**
- Important to see that even though Jesus was the Son of God ... he was still tempted
 - Tempted to
 - Worship the devil in exchange for all the kingdoms of the world
 - Give up not going to the cross
 - It shows he experienced all the fullness of our humanity
 - He wasn't immune from all the realities we face of living in a fallen world
- But of course the difference between us and Jesus is ... he was without sin
 - He never gave into sin

- Need to realise that if Jesus was tempted but was without sin ... that it's not wrong / not a sin to be tempted
- Sin comes about when we give into temptation > when we court it > when we chase it > when we fall for its charm

- Really helpful for us to realise this
 - Every day you face temptation
 - Do I click on that link to the half naked woman
 - Do I have a second look at that girl walking down the street
 - Do I make that derogatory comment about someone that makes me feel good but puts them down
 - Do judge that person because of their looks
 - Whatever ...
 - Having those thoughts is not sinful ... that's temptation

- But when we do give into temptation
 - When we fail > and we sin
 - We have a great high priest who's atoned for our sin and gone through the heavens to represent us before the Father in Heaven
- Which means ... you can come before God the Father with confidence knowing that you will receive grace and mercy

- The temptation for some ppl when this do sin is to hide from God
 - They're sin is so serious in their eyes that they're wracked with guilt and shame they can't bear the thought of coming before God
 - They think
 - "There's no way God can forgive me"
 - "I feel so ashamed, I can't possibly go to church or read the Bible or pray"
 - So they withdraw from God
 - Try and work it out for themselves
 - Confide in a close friend

- But knowing Jesus is your great high priest ought to drive us **to** God ... not away from him
 - Because this is the time we need him the most
 - We need a great high priest > we need our sins atoned for > we need someone to intercede with us before God
 - In him we find sympathy, mercy, grace to help us
- When you know Jesus as your high priest then you'll go to him with confidence and without delay

- Let us hold firmly to Jesus our merciful high priest
- Let us approach the throne of grace with **confidence**, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need

4. Jesus our qualified high priest

- Having made this bold assertion that Jesus is our merciful high priest ... the writer of Hebrews goes on in Ch 5 to show how Jesus is qualified to be our high priest
- He does that
 - firstly in v1-4 by outlining the OT qualifications for high priests
 - secondly in v5-10 showing how Jesus fulfils those qualifications for being a high priest

- The OT Law specified that out of the 12 tribes of Israel ... the tribe of Levi (Levites) were designated to be Israel's priests
 - From among the Levites, the High Priest was chosen

- This is what v1-4 is getting at when it says every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed
 - To represent them in matters related to God
 - To offer gifts and sacrifices for sin
- When God gave the OT law to Israel at Mt Sinai, it was Moses brother Aaron who was chosen by God to be Israel's first high priest
- It wasn't a position that could be claimed or taken ... it was a God appointed role ... because he was to intercede between God and the ppl

- Not only was Jesus qualified to be our great high priest because he fulfilled the function of the high priest ... but he was qualified because he was appointed to the role by God the Father
 - Which is the point of the two quotes from Ps 2 and Ps 110 in vv5-6
 - But God said to him,
 - "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."
 - ⁶ And he says in another place,
 - "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

- By quoting Ps 2 the writer is showing that the Son of God that he's been exalting for the past 4 chapters ... is the same person who has been appointed by God to be our great high priest
 - And Jesus not like a HP from the tribe of Levi who would die and be replaced by another appointed HP
 - Jesus would be a HP **forever** ... in the order of Melchizedek

- His first qualification is because he's appointed by God to be a HP forever
- His second qualification is because Jesus was fully human is able to sympathise with us > v7-8
 - *During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered*

- **Illustration – People who've experienced your pain**
- I don't know if you've had something terrible happen to you
 - Not talking about ... (tea / Maccas)
 - Maybe you lost a loved one
 - Had a broken relationship
 - Deal with financial hardship / mental illness
- And you're talking to someone about it who hasn't suffered in that way
 - And as you talk, you realise that though they may be full of good intentions ... and they may want to help ... you realise they just don't understand
 - You talk, but there's no connection ... it's hard to relate to them
 - They just don't know what it's like

- And then you're talking to someone else about it
- And they say
 - "Actually, that happened to me"

- "Last year my brother died" or
- "I've been very hurt in relationships"
- "I've been unemployed"

- And as they share with you about their own experience in that situation ... you hear them express what you're feeling inside
 - And you realise ... here is someone who understands what it's like
 - There's a real connection between you, because they've been where you are
 - They know what it's like
- Jesus has been where we are ... and he knows what it's like

- Obviously Jesus hasn't experienced everything we've experienced
 - Hasn't experienced being married or growing old
 - But he has experienced suffering and temptation

- Maybe there are times you feel exhausted / tired out with living for God?
 - Jesus knows what that's like – he's been there
- Maybe you feel let down, hurt and betrayed, even by friends!?
 - Jesus knows what that's like – he's been there
- Maybe there are times you've suffered physical abuse or mental anguish?
 - Jesus knows what that's like
- Maybe you have faced a series of injustices where the world seems to be against you?
 - Jesus knows what that's like
- Maybe you feel lonely ... a loneliness that hurts ... makes you want to cry?
 - Jesus knows what that's like
- Maybe you struggle to hold on to God and keep trusting Jesus > to keep living for him ... to keep fighting temptation
 - Jesus knows what that's like

- And what that means is we can have a real relationship with him
 - It can be very easy to relate to Jesus in functional terms rather than in relational terms
 - So Jesus becomes this distant figure who died for us and saves us ...
 - But it's all very functional ... he performs a task for us
 - But he remains distant from us

- The truth is Jesus has lived a real human life > he knows what it's like
 - And so we can have a real relationship with him
 - We can talk to him > like we can talk to that person who's been through the same experiences we have
 - We can talk to Jesus > we can tell him how it feels > we can tell him how it hurts to follow him
 - We can cry out to him

- And all the time we do that ...
 - He can ever so tenderly sympathise with us in our weaknesses, our temptations, our sufferings and our pains
 - He's lived it ... and so he's able to sympathise with us

Application

- Friends ... when it comes to standing before God in the court-room of heaven ...
 - We don't have a Dennis Denuto representing us
 - We have a fully qualified Lawrence Hammill QC acting on our behalf

- Jesus is the perfect high priest who represents us before God
 - He's perfectly qualified for the task
 - He offers the perfect sacrifice of himself for the atonement of our sin
 - He was appointed by God himself to be a high priest forever
 - He's able to perfectly sympathise with us because he himself experienced all that we go through

- Because Jesus is our perfect high priest ...
 - You don't need a priest or minister act as your representative before God > we're just Dennis Denutos
 - You don't need to confess your sins to a priest
 - You don't need to pray through a priest or Mary or the so-called saints
- Because Jesus is the perfect high priest who has gone through the heavens is seated at the Father's right hand
 - He's far greater qualified than any earthly priest to deal with your sin and ensure your prayers are heard
- Let us hold firmly to Jesus our perfect and merciful high priest
- And because he is our perfect and merciful high priest ...
- Let us approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need

PRAY

Our Father in heaven, we give you thanks and praise for sending Jesus to be our great high priest. Thank you that his suffering and temptation means he is able to identify with us our own suffering and temptation. We thank you that as our great high priest he is willing and able to intercede before you on our behalf and help us in our moments of weakness and sin. Please help us to continue holding firmly to the faith we profess and approaching your throne with confidence because of who Christ is and what he's done for us. In his name we pray, **AMEN**