

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

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ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER 15/5/2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you today? I am thankful for the privilege of prayer, that we can approach the throne of grace and mercy in our times of need.

Today's encouragement continues in Hebrews "Christ – like his brothers" before looking at church matters.

ENCOURAGEMENT: Christ – like his brothers (Hebrews 2:14-18)

Do you struggle with your humanity? All too often I am aware of my failure as a human. My body is slowly breaking down and getting frailer. Things I would attempt when I was younger, I now leave to others. Sin gets the better of me all too often. I am on a downward spiral towards death. I long for a better body, a purer spirit, an enduring life. In our next passage in Hebrews, we see Jesus become human for our sake.

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrew 2:14-18

We see Jesus sharing in our humanity. He dons our flesh and blood and experiences our humanity. He is one of us. The purpose of becoming one of us is that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death. Jesus dies destroying the Devil's hold over us, so no longer be condemned as a sinner and so afraid death. People are held as slaves to their fear of death. We try and escape death, to avoid its inevitability. We try and stay forever young – eat well and exercise daily. We try and hide the evidence of our own approaching death – dyeing our grey hair, cosmetic surgery to give sagging skin a lift, make-up to hide faces creased with years of joy and sorrow. Yet it does nothing to slow the relentless march of our days towards the day of our death. We live in the shadow of its approaching finality.

But Jesus tastes death for us. He becomes like us to represent us. He is our high priest, our representative before God. His death, becomes our death. He is the sacrifice for our sins enduring the wrath of God in our place. He steps into our lives and calls us brother and sister. He uses his strength and life for us, expending all he has upon the cross for us. He stands as our sinless Saviour who lifts our humanity to the very throne room of God that we might be God's family with Jesus as our brother.

In Jesus we find new humanity. He knows all our weakness and is without sin. He represents us before God as our brother. So in our frailty, and before the approaching shadow of death, we need not fear. Jesus our brother has done what we cannot do. So look to him in hope, because death is no longer death for us but being swallowed up by life to live with God forever. We can live without fear and face injury, sickness, frailty and age with courage and confidence because of Christ. We can face sin and guilt with relief because Christ has destroyed its power over us. Do you fear death? Look to Jesus and see the conquest of life.

As always, love and prayers,
Steve