

## Hebrews 2:10-18

<sup>10</sup>Certainly it was fitting for God (the one for whom and through whom everything exists), in leading many sons to glory, to bring the author of their salvation to his goal through sufferings. <sup>11</sup>For he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified all have one Father. For that reason, he is not ashamed to call them brothers. <sup>12</sup>He says:

I will declare your name to my brothers.

Within the congregation I will sing your praise.

<sup>13</sup>And again:

I will trust in him.

And again:

Here I am and the children God has given me.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, since the children share flesh and blood, he also shared the same flesh and blood, so that through death he could destroy the one who had the power of death (that is, the Devil) <sup>15</sup>and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. <sup>16</sup>For surely he was not concerned with helping angels but with helping Abraham's offspring. <sup>17</sup>For this reason, he had to become like his brothers in every way, in order that he would be a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, so that he could pay for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup>Indeed, because he suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

## Epic Journey

### I.

Epic journey. I suppose you could say that the Bible is filled with them.

The first epic journey began with a bite of fruit. Shame quickly followed; a realization of nakedness—a realization of sin. Banished from their home, Adam and Eve no doubt looked back to see the angel holding his flaming sword turning in every direction to prevent them from returning and gaining access to the Tree of Life.

People have been on the move ever since that first journey.

Noah traveled for a year in the ark. Who knows how much of the sea-covered earth he traversed as the ark rode the waves at the direction of God himself. Abraham made his journey from Ur of the Chaldeans to the promised land of Canaan. Jacob and his family journeyed to Egypt to escape famine, but eventually they were enslaved there. With God's guiding hand, Moses became the leader of the people in Egypt to bring them out of slavery and into the wilderness for an epic journey back to the Promised Land.

There are plenty of other journeys recorded in the Bible. A couple of them stand out as we celebrate the Christmas season. There was the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem just before Jesus was born. The Wise Men made their journey to see and worship the King who they recognized as a different kind of King than any other. The little family had to make a journey to flee from Herod, who wanted to kill the baby Jesus before he could accomplish all he came to do.

### II.

Life is a journey. So goes the often-used phrase.

Birth. So helpless. So many needs that must be met by others. But so much promise. So much hope. So much that is unknown. Life stretches out before you with so many

possibilities.

You learn. You grow. Sorting through the possibilities one or more gives direction and focus.

Sometimes everything seems clear and simple to understand. Other days there is confusion. There is a whirlwind of activity and stress and joy and pain and sorrow and loss.

And...all of a sudden, it seems...you look back and realize how far you have come; how much you have done; how much is left undone.

Then—helpless again. Needing someone to lift you up, to hold you, to help you through to the end.

Life is a journey. A rather shortsighted view, actually.

To be sure, life is a journey, but there is more to it than simply living and dying. If all you have recognized is living and learning and growing and, eventually, dying, you have missed something.

Today's Second Lesson talks about "...those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death" (Hebrews 2:15, EHV). Though we recognize that life is a journey, no one *wants* to die. There is an ingrained and inborn fear of death. A healthy fear, it turns out.

The epic journey of Adam and Eve out to find their way in a damaged world tells the tale. "So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned" (Romans 5:12, EHV). The epic journey of life always ends the same: death. Death is part of the journey because of sin. Sin has consequences, and the most epic consequence is death.

### III.

That wasn't the way it was *supposed* to be. God wanted a different ending. God wanted no ending at all, only perfect joy and happiness for people forever with him.

Another epic journey was necessary. "Certainly it was fitting for God (the one for whom and through whom everything exists), in leading many sons to glory, to bring the author of their salvation to his goal through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10, EHV).

The journeys at the beginning of Jesus' life were just a part of the plan. Of all the epic journeys spoken of in the Bible, the one spoken of in the Lesson before us today is the most epic of all.

"Therefore, since the children share flesh and blood, he also shared the same flesh and blood, so that through death he could destroy the one who had the power of death (that is, the Devil) <sup>15</sup>and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death" (Hebrews 2:14-15, EHV). Jesus, true God, began the epic journey by humbling himself to share the same kind of flesh and blood every other human being occupies. He took on the same journey of life: being born of an ordinary mother, though in an extraordinary way so that he would be born without sin.

"For surely he was not concerned with helping angels but with helping Abraham's offspring" (Hebrews 2:16, EHV). He lived and grew and learned, though there was always a special purpose. Angels don't need help. Those who followed the Devil and were thrown out of heaven are beyond help—lost eternally with Satan. Those who remain angels have been confirmed in their faithful service of the Heavenly Father; they have never sinned and do not need rescue from a life of sin. Abraham's offspring, on the other hand—people—*do*.

"For this reason, he had to become like his brothers in every way, in order that he would be a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, so that he could pay for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17, EHV). In order to set free those held in slavery

by the fear of death, as mentioned in an earlier verse, Jesus had to become the sacrifice for sin. He had to be just like a normal human being. He had to *be* a normal human being; but he had to be even more. He had to be perfect—without sin—so that his sacrifice for the sins of others—of everyone—would be acceptable to the Heavenly Father.

“Indeed, because he suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18, EHV). The writer reminds us of another epic journey. For his whole life Jesus was tempted, but the mind’s eye is directed to Jesus in the wilderness, being tempted by Satan in a hellish battle for his soul that lasted an intense 40 days. He refused to give up; he refused to give in.

Our mind’s eye fast-forwards to the final epic battle. On the cross Jesus finished the last battle for our souls. Life has been won for us. “For he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified all have one Father. For that reason, he is not ashamed to call them brothers” (Hebrews 2:11, EHV). Brothers and sisters we are of Jesus. Brothers and sisters of the One who gave his very life in dying love for us.

#### IV.

Life is a journey. Some times the seas may be rough, sailing might be difficult. Waves of trouble seep over the decks. Storms of confusion and despair might blow and howl against us.

The Holy Spirit changed our course. It isn’t just a meaningless trudging through life now, but a walk of life with a purpose. We live for Jesus; we live for the One who died for us. We live because he lives.

He is our Captain who continues to pilot the ship. He has been here before. He knows the waters well. In him we place our trust. The One we call the Author of our salvation is bringing us to the one, last, epic journey—our epic journey to life eternal. Amen.