

### **Hebrews 2:14-end**

<sup>14</sup> Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. <sup>16</sup> For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

### **The message**

<sup>4-15</sup> Since the children are made of flesh and blood, it's logical that the Saviour took on flesh and blood in order to rescue them by his death. By embracing death, taking it into himself, he destroyed the Devil's hold on death and freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death.

<sup>16-18</sup> It's obvious, of course, that he didn't go to all this trouble for angels. It was for people like us, children of Abraham. That's why he had to enter into every detail of human life. Then, when he came before God as high priest to get rid of the people's sins, he would have already experienced it all himself—all the pain, all the testing—and would be able to help where help was needed.

### **Mark 1:29-39**

#### **Jesus Heals Many at Simon's House**

<sup>29</sup> As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup> Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. <sup>31</sup> He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

<sup>32</sup> That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. <sup>33</sup> And the whole city was gathered around the door. <sup>34</sup> And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

#### **A Preaching Tour in Galilee**

<sup>35</sup> In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. <sup>36</sup> And Simon and his companions hunted for him. <sup>37</sup> When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." <sup>38</sup> He answered, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." <sup>39</sup> And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

The words from Hebrews are not easy to follow. But the writer is trying to hold together Jesus' divinity and his humanity.

In chapter one he writes *"The Son is the radiance of the father's glory, and the exact representation of his being"*.

Now in chapter 2, talking of human beings represented by the children of Israel, he says, *"Since the children share flesh and blood, he Jesus, himself shared the same things"*. That is, he became a human being just like we are sharing joys and sorrows hurt, and pain.

The last thing the writer here says is he experienced was to be *"tempted yet without sin"*.

Last Sunday we celebrated the baptism of Jesus when he received the father's empowerment as his Son, and was sent by the spirit into the desert for that period of temptation where he did not give into any of the devil's attractive options for his ministry. Now we see his ministry in action.

As a human being he must have felt both the thrill of doing his father's will, and a certain disquiet of how it would work out. So, he goes first to the synagogue to worship with his community. Worshipping together is still one of the best ways to put things into perspective, as the scriptures are read, and expounded, and prayers offered to God. Sadly, denied us at the moment.

Mark's gospel continues.

And my word the work begins as his compassion reaches out to heal a man with an "evil spirit", and in such a public place. But he goes forward with growing confidence, looking to a supper with his friends.

Whether Simon warned his wife and mother-in-law he was going to bring friends home to supper, we shall never know, but the whole household is brought to a standstill with the illness of the mother-in-law. It must have been very serious because the supper would have been ready and prepared before this sabbath day.

Jesus has no hesitation in going forward taking her by the hand - and he lifted her up.

That's a lovely phrase - not only helping her to raise from her sick bed, but raising her spirits, restoring her to health, enabling the fever to leave her, so much so she was able to serve them supper - Wow!

After supper, with Sunset, the sabbath ended. People will have heard about his healing powers from the man in the synagogue, so many people gathered round Simon's door. Not only to be healed, but to see miracles being done. And Jesus did them, healed physical diseases, and the mentally ill as well.

A very busy day. But Jesus knows he cannot continue without the infilling of Gods spirit, so he gets up while it is still dark and finds an isolated place so he can pray, just be with God, thanking him, praising him, asking for strength, perhaps even asking if he's on the right track.

And that's such a model for us too.

Of course we are **only** human beings, but we have been called to be in a close relationship with God, and how do we do that? Just as we do with our human relationships, spend time with one another. If Jesus - who was God - had to spend time with God, how much more do we need that, in public worship and private prayer? **And** in getting on with what God intended him to do - teach and heal, and ultimately show to the *n*th degree how much Gods loves and forgives us human beings, on the cross.

St Benedict, or his followers, coined the phrase "*Work and pray*" - *ora et labora*.

We are not, of course, called to work as Jesus did, but we are called to show his compassion to the world, wherever we are and in all circumstances.

That's really hard at this time when we cannot join in public worship face to face, when we hardly see people to show them compassion. Perhaps I went overboard trying to be helpful to the lovely team at my vaccination!

But of course, we also could say we have more time to spend with God in private prayer - if you need encouragement to do that there are contacts on the news sheet.

But the phone calls, the cards, the doing what we need to do at the present, to keep all of us as safe as possible, is the most loving way we can live at the moment. Let's keep on encouraging one another to do that more than regretting what we cannot do.

Work and pray - in 2021 - whatever form that takes.