

Do you see Jesus? Hebrews 2:5-9

Many years ago the six of us made our way down to Desmit, Minnesota for their annual presentation of the Laura Ingalls Wilder book “Big House In the Woods”. Camping around the village green with about 20 other educators and their families we visited several of the locations written about in the book. Later that evening we gathered with several hundred other people to watch literally the whole town enact the story in living drama. I would say that most of us at some time in our growing up years had an interest and even a fascination with the pioneers. When you hear that word all sorts of images come to mind all revolving around an adventuresome spirit that led them to push forward into the unknown.

The author of Hebrews changes images as he continues to present Jesus to his readers and hearers. From the exalted images of the opening paragraphs he moves now to Jesus as a pioneer. Will you open your Bibles to Hebrews 2. I am going to read it from the Message but I think you should be able to follow along. I will pause to make some quick comments as we move towards the main text for this morning.

“It’s crucial that we keep a firm grip on what we have heard so we don’t drift off. If the old message delivered by angels was valid and nobody got away with anything, do you think we can run the risk of neglecting this latest message, this magnificent salvation? First of all, it was delivered in person by the Master, then accurately passed on by those who heard it from him. All the while God was validating it with gifts through the Holy Spirit, all sorts of signs and miracles, as he saw fit.”

In some ways the author is repeating what he began the letter with, a description of Jesus and the significance of what he said and what he did. At the time of the writing of this letter there was a strong belief in much of Judaism that following the arrival of the Messiah a new age would begin wherein all of creation would be placed under the direction of angelic beings. They believe in two Messiahs; one a priest and one a king and they would restore the religious and political authority of

Israel under the overarching leadership of angels. It is against this backdrop that the author continues, picking it up in verse 6. *“God didn’t put angels in charge of this business of salvation that we’re dealing with here. It says in Scripture, ‘What is man and woman that you bother with them; why take a second look their way? You made them not quiet as high as angels, bright with Eden’s dawn light; Then you put them in charge of your entire handcrafted world.’”* Looking back to the creation story in Genesis 1 the author reminds them of mankind’s exalted position as the ruler and dominion keeper over all the rest of creation. Humanity was the crowning expression of God’s creative work. Back to the text, verse 8b *“When God put them in charge of everything, nothing was excluded. But we don’t see it yet, don’t see everything under human jurisdiction.”* Man’s sin and fall threw all of creation off into confusion and chaos. Paul talks about creation groaning for the day when true order is restored.

And then the author gets to the main point he is trying to make. *“What we do see is Jesus, made ‘not quiet as high as angels,’ and then, through the experience of his death, crowned so much higher than any angel, with a glory ‘bright with Eden’s dawn light.’ In that death, by God’s grace, he fully experienced death in every person’s place.”* Jesus was fully human, thus becoming a little lower than the angels. His full obedience, perfect life, death and then resurrection placed him above all angels as the first human to fully live out all the demands of the law and therefore receive the reward of full dominion over all creation. And this is where we get to the pioneer. *“It makes good sense that the God who got everything started and keeps everything going now completes the work by making the salvation pioneer perfect through suffering as he leads all these people to glory. Since the one who saves and those who are saved have a common origin, Jesus doesn’t hesitate to treat them as family.”*

This is not an easy text to understand but let me see if I can focus on the main point. The job of a pioneer is to make the journey first, overcome any obstacle and create a path for all who wish to

come later on. This is exactly what Jesus has done. Coming as a full human, and yet still fully God, Jesus lived in perfect obedience, suffered for our sins, and was established now as full ruler over all creation not only as God of very gods but as Jesus God's Son, the perfect human. And his completed work has now provided us a way to arrive at the same end. A way paved and empowered by God's grace. Now, let's jump down to the last part of the chapter picking it up at verse 14. *Since the children are made of flesh and blood, it's logical that the Savior took on flesh and blood in order to rescue them by his death. By embracing death, taking it to himself, he destroyed the devil's hold on death and freed all who cower through life, scared of death. 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.*"

Often times as a parent I can remember my children being afraid of a variety of things. The easiest way to get them to face and conquer what they were afraid of was for me to do it in front of them first. Like a pioneer I would show them that it was possible to face whatever they were afraid of and overcome the fear. To the readers of Hebrews the greatest fear was death and nothing much has changed since then. For one who has made a commitment to follow Christ death is no longer something that has a stranglehold over us because we follow a pioneer who has already gone through death and conquered it, taking its sting away because for Christ followers; death is not the end.