



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Christ's Priestly Work: Birth to Baptism

Hebrews 4 and Various Scriptures

Nicholas Gerken | January 3, 2021

Good morning, Village Bible Church. My name is Nicholas Gerken. I've been interning here at Village Bible Church for a few years now. You'll usually see me in the summer, hanging out with the youth or working with Pastor Tim and all the other campus pastors.

This morning I've been given the opportunity and blessing to preach about our Savior and our King, Jesus Christ. We have just finished our Christmas season and the Advent series. Christmas is that wonderful time of year where we commemorate and remember that Jesus came as an infant.

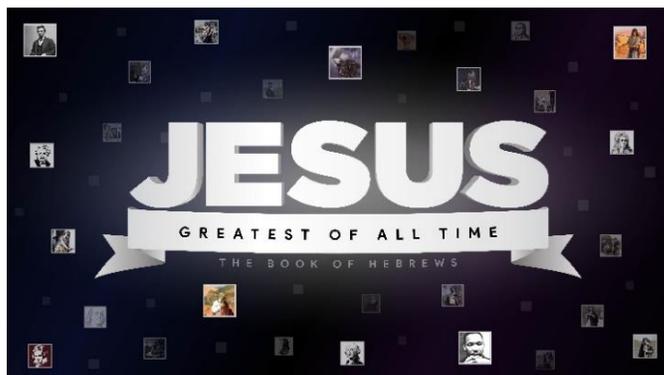
When we finish the Christmas season, after we've clapped for the Christmas pageant after we've put away the little nativity sets and the baby Jesuses, then we make this really odd transition. We go from talking about Jesus as a little baby boy to Him suddenly being 30 years old and beginning His ministry.

The Gospels really don't give us a good in-between story. It's baby Jesus, then there's the little story about Jesus at the temple as a boy—which we'll talk about later—then it just skips right to Jesus being 30 years old. He comes down to the river, John the Baptist sees Him, then He begins His ministry. We don't ponder too much about the time in between, but there's so much that happened in that time and it raises a lot of questions. God came to be a human—what was that like? What was Jesus like as a toddler? Did He throw tantrums or was He poised all the time? What was His relationship with His friends? Did He have friends His age? What would that be like? What was His family dynamic? How did Joseph and Mary parent Him? What was it like when Jesus hit puberty? Did His voice crack or did He always have the voice of an angel? Was He athletic or did He stay inside reading the Torah all day? We don't know the answers to these questions and really they're a little childish, but they do bring up one really good question: what was Jesus doing from the time of His birth to the time of His baptism? What was He doing before He began His ministry?

My curiosity was inflamed when I was reading an article this past week titled, "Jesus' Lost Years." The article was about that time between Jesus being at the temple and Jesus at 30 years of age. What was He doing in those 17 or 18 years? The article gave a few theories and a few of them even made sense. Jesus became a carpenter, like His earthly father. That makes sense. Jesus sat under the rabbis and learned from them, then He Himself became a rabbi to prepare for His ministry. That makes sense. Then the theories became stranger and stranger, to the point of talking about Jesus going to India to learn Buddhism, then He returned to the Middle East to share what He learned. Or maybe He went to Great Britain to learn magic and rituals from the druids. At that point, I closed the article and thought, "You're all being weird now."

But what was He doing? It's a mystery, but there are things in Scripture that allude to certain possibilities. I would like to suggest that these were not "lost years" for Jesus, but they were the years of preparation. Jesus was preparing to become our Savior. So let's talk about what He was doing.

As we end the Christmas season when we celebrate Christ as a baby, and before we jump back into our series in the book of Hebrews where we talk about Him as our High Priest and Mediator, I want us to consider what was happening in between those



times. If you have a Bible, please open to Isaiah 53:11. The passage says this: *“Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see light and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.”*

The entire chapter of Isaiah 53 describes the Messiah, the work of the Messiah, the Christ Who would come. Much of it is spent talking about His suffering, pain and sorrow that He would experience on behalf of His people, at the hands of His own people.

Verse three says He was *“despised and rejected...a man of sorrows.”* Then it describes how He will die for the iniquities of His people. We're used to talking about that. Jesus died for your sins—that is what salvation is. But catch this. Jesus is doing much more than just dying for our sins. Go back to this passage. Verse says, *“...by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous...”* This righteous One, this perfect One, this Servant before God almighty will take that righteousness and account it to His people. This is important. Yes, Jesus is going to come and die for our sins, but the righteousness He gives is also crucial. Theologians distinguish the two in this way: the passive obedience or the passive righteousness of Christ, and the active righteousness of Christ.

The passive righteousness of Christ—the receiving—is that Christ will die for us. He will take on the punishment and wrath that is truly ours. We know this. We talk about this. But we also need to be careful to make sure we talk about His active righteousness. Christ not only died for your sins, but He lived a perfect life for you too. He lived a perfect life so He could credit that to you. It's crucial for us to experience and know both of these things. We receive both at salvation.

Let me give you an example of why this is important. As an example, let's just say I give Tully Williams my wallet. I have to go run an errand, so I say, “Tully, just watch over my wallet and make sure no one steals it.” Let's say that while I'm gone, Tully reaches in and takes \$20 out of my wallet. Now, this is hypothetical; Tully wouldn't steal \$20 from me and I don't have \$20 to steal. But let's say he did. He takes it and let's say I come back and I find out, then I call him out on it. “Tully, you stole \$20 from me.” Then out of his guilt, he pays me back. See, Tully has transgressed against me, so now he's in debt to me—and he pays that back.

But we're not good, right? Yes, he's paid me back, but he's also done something deeper. He has broken the relationship. Again, this is hypothetical; we're actually good friends. But in this illustration, he's broken that relationship. That's what happens to us when we sin. See, when Adam fell in the garden, and when we sin, we not only are indebted to Christ, we owe Him our life. We now have a broken relationship with the Father. Scriptures teaches in Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death and in Hebrews 9:22 that there is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood. Simply Christ's dying for our sins is not enough. In the illustration about my wallet, when I see him after he stole that \$20 from me, at worst I hate him; at best I'm indifferent. Either way, I don't want to see his face. It's the same thing with Christ. If Christ only died for our sins, but He didn't live a perfect life and credit it to us, then at the very best, we're neutral. We're indifferent and we have to earn that good favor.

The great thing about this, the thing we rejoice in, the thing we worship Christ for, is that He came, not just to die a perfect death for you, but to live a perfect life for you also.

So what does this have to do with our topic of that period in between His birth and His baptism? Well, it has everything to do with this topic because from the beginning, from the moment of His conception, He was obtaining a righteousness for you.

Becoming a perfect sacrifice

That's our first point: Christ was obtaining a righteousness for us. What does this mean? To put it simply, Jesus Christ was born perfect, without sin, so that we who were born in sin could be made perfect. Jesus Christ then grew into a toddler and a young adult in perfect obedience to His parents, to His elders and to God, so that we who were disobedient to our parents and our elders and our God might receive His obedience. Jesus Christ lived under the law and perfectly obeyed the law. He had a perfect relationship with the Father as an adult, so that we who are adults might also receive that favor from God and a reconciled relationship with the Father.

See, from the beginning, He was obtaining. These were not lost years when Jesus was twiddling His thumbs, waiting until He was old enough to die for our sins. Every single day He was obtaining a righteousness that He was going to impute on you, that He was going to give you. He was going to map over your failed life with His successful and perfect life—with everything Christ did. His birth is now your birth. His baptism—when God proclaimed over His Son, “This is My Son in Whom I am well pleased”—is now our baptism with God proclaiming the same thing over us. It is credited to us. Also, one day we will share in His death and

His resurrection. And His ascension and glorification—one day we will share in them as well. He credits all of that to us. He did so much more than just die for us—He lived for us.

So what does this mean for you and me? If this is the first time you're hearing this and you don't consider yourself a Christian, I invite you to participate in this. I invite you to believe in the Lord and receive not only His death to pay for your sins, but also His perfect life, so that you might have a reconciled relationship with the Father.

For those of us who are Christ followers, who proclaim Jesus as our King and Savior, I invite you to rejoice in just how good our God is.

Growing up, I used to think that Christ reluctantly saved me, that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit held out their hand of salvation, then I just happened to grab hold of it. They would roll their eyes and drag me into heaven, because I was just this filthy sinner. When God looked at me and considered the relationship between us, He would roll His eyes and say, "Well, he said the prayer, so he got the deal." No, Christ came so that the same love the Father has for the Son, the same favor the Father has for the Son, might be mine and might be yours also. So I invite you to rejoice in that, to remember that, to ponder on those things.

Becoming a perfect example

What was Christ doing during those preparation years when He was preparing to become our Savior? He was becoming our perfect example of humility. Now, Christ is our example in many ways. We can look at His life, we can look at what Scripture says and we can see His example. But I want us to observe just His humility first—Christ in His incarnation and how He became our perfect example of humility.

Luke 2 gives us this really fascinating story of Jesus as a boy in the temple. I'll paraphrase the story for us. It goes like this: Jesus, with His parents, came to celebrate one of the festivals in Jerusalem. They went to the temple, made their sacrifices and all was good. Then His parents left. What they didn't know was that Jesus somehow snuck off. After three days of searching for their son, because they literally lost the Savior, they found Him in the temple.

What did they find Him doing? He was sitting at the feet of the religious leaders of the day, learning and asking questions. They were amazed at what He was able to understand. His parents came up to Him and said, "All right. We've got to go." He responded, "Didn't you know I would be in My Father's house?" Then it says that in obedience to His parents, He got up and went with them. Jesus was in the right there. He was doing what He was supposed to be doing, yet He submitted to His parents. Luke then tells us He grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with men and with God.

This is a truly an odd story, because Luke 1 and half of Luke 2 describe how God Himself, the God of the universe, is now here. He has come as a baby boy. "Go see Him! He is God." Then in chapter two, Luke is reminding his readers, "By the way, He is also truly human." What we're learning—what Christ is displaying for us—is the most extraordinary form of humility. He went from being God to being a baby boy. I want us to ponder this.

Philippians 2:6-8 says this:

Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The Son of God had become a child. Think about what that means. The very God Who spoke everything into existence came to babble as an infant. The all-knowing God of the universe came and took on the mind of a child to learn from His creation, from flawed humanity. The God Who holds all creation in His hands came to be held in the hands of a peasant woman and man, Mary and Joseph. The all-sustaining God, the very source of life, came to nurse on His mother, depending on His mother and father for food. The indestructible God of the universe came to receive scrapes, bumps, blisters and splinters, even the common cold. The Lord God became a teenager, went through puberty and experienced all the temptations and frustrations that come with being a teenager. God Himself was performing the ultimate display of humility by becoming a child, so that we might understand what true humility is.

It should be no surprise to us that 30 years later when Jesus began His ministry, He tells us that if we are going to enter the Kingdom of God, we too must stoop low, be born again (John 3:1-15) and become like a child (Mark 10:13-16). We too must

experience that sort of humility. Doug Wilson, a pastor and theologian, wrote a book called *God Rest Ye Merry*, pondering on some of the themes of the incarnation. He wrote this:

We are told to clothe ourselves with humility and tender mercies. When Jesus told the disciples to follow Him, He certainly had the cross in mind. We are to take up the cross and follow Him, but we're not just to follow Him to the cross, we are also called to follow Him to the manger.

We must be born again. We must become a little child, because we are much too adult, we are too full of ourselves, we are too self-important. The new birth is a birth of humility. What do we have right after a birth—especially the new birth? A baby. Which is exactly what we are invited to become—a little child.

Christ then becomes our perfect example of humility in His incarnation. By the way, He led Himself to death on the cross and we're called to follow that example. This kind of humility can come in many different ways. There are a million different ways we need to be applying this to our lives. I want to give you four prompts—questions to think about—ways to challenge yourself:

1. In what way can I deny myself, put aside my wants, so that I can serve the needs of others?
2. What things, rewards or recognition can I forego, so that I can point to Christ's work instead of my own?
3. Is there anyone I can learn to submit myself to, even though I believe I'm right?
4. In what ways does Christ display humility that I can also show in my own life?

These are the things Christ was doing from the time of His birth up until His baptism. Even beyond that, He is still our example.

Becoming a sympathizing Mediator

Now we come to the third way that Christ was preparing Himself to be the Savior of mankind during these preparation years. Christ was becoming a sympathizing Mediator. Our last verse for today is Hebrews 4:15–16. If you recall, we were going through a series on Hebrews before we entered the Christmas season.

We're going to jump back in where we left off, but I want us to back up and review Hebrews 4:15–16:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

As I was saying earlier, Christ came and lived a normal human life. He took on all the sorrow, pain, temptations and trials that we do. He didn't just come to float an inch above the earth, untouched by anything, unbothered by anybody and unannoyed by little things. He didn't come not to stub His toe, not to experience sorrow and not to experience all the things we experience. Rather, He came to live a normal life. In fact, I would argue that maybe His life was much more sorrowful, much more painful, much more agonizing than ours. And He did it for a cause. He did it for a reason. Here are some of the things the Bible alludes to about Christ's life.

As you remember, most people would have seen Mary's pregnancy as scandalous, a child born out of wedlock. Even Joseph almost divorced her for it. So when Jesus was born and was walking around in Nazareth, can you imagine the glares He would have received? "There's that Jesus, born out of wedlock."

Can you imagine Jesus growing up, recognizing that people didn't understand the righteousness of God, realizing they didn't know Who He really was and being completely misunderstood? He also had to watch as His mother and father, who had been nothing but obedient and faithful, were disregarded and disrespected by the culture around them. Can you imagine how heavily that would have weighed on His heart? We know Jesus' family was quite poor. When they offered sacrifices in the temple, Luke 2 says they gave two pigeons. That was the sacrifice for those who were poor. He grew up in poverty. He didn't have much.

We also know that somewhere between seeing Mary and Joseph at the temple when He was a boy to Jesus coming on the scene at the marriage in Cana, Joseph had disappeared. Scholars think Joseph either packed up and left, because he couldn't handle it anymore, or more likely—and I would think this—at a young age Joseph died, leaving Mary as a single mother of her family and Jesus to be their breadwinner. This isn't counting His friend Lazarus' death. This isn't counting the heartache He experienced. This isn't counting watching as humanity tore itself apart while He was waiting to become their Savior. This isn't counting the times He was despised and rejected. This isn't counting Isaiah 53, which says He was a man of anguish and sorrow, that men would turn their faces from Him in disappointment and be rejected by His own people. This isn't counting any of that.

Jesus came to experience all of this anguish and pain—why? Why would the God of the universe stoop so low, just to have His creation mock Him, spit in His face and crucify Him? He did it so that He could become a sympathizing Mediator, One Who was capable of understanding sorrow and pain while He intercedes for us to the Father. I want you to understand just how crucial this is. If Jesus Christ our Savior is not sympathizing, if He didn't experience our sorrow, infirmities and other issues, then He is only a distant, calculating accountant who couldn't possibly understand us. So when we cry out to Him, He would not have been able to shed a tear for us. When we cry out to Him, He would carry our cries to the Father in a monotone way. "Yeah, you know, Nick needs help."

Instead we do have a Mediator Who has experienced all of our temptations and all of our trials. So we can do as the passage tells us—come boldly before the throne, knowing that Christ, our Mediator, has every capability to mediate for us and know what it is to be human. The wonderful thing about Christ is that He doesn't just give a teaspoon of grace to soothe our teaspoon of pain and make our terrible lives on this earth, filled with sin and pain, just a little bit brighter. That's not Christ. Ephesians 1:7-8 uses the word "lavishes" which is a word of excess. He's going overboard with this sort of grace. He lavishes His grace upon us. That means that when we have sinned, He drowns our sin in a sea of mercy. When we have doubts, He buries them in a mountain of promises. When we have pain and sorrow, when we're hungry and need sustenance, He gives us a feast—not just a morsel of bread. He's the bread of life.

On top of that, if that isn't good enough for you, Romans 8 tells us that the Spirit of Christ is within us, when He intercedes for us, groans with words that are not fathomable. He groans with words we couldn't possibly understand. What does this mean? It means there's no pain too deep, no sorrow too troublesome, no trauma too excruciating that our Christ cannot understand and mediate for. So when we go to the Father, Christ knows. Christ understands. Christ has felt that and He will even shed tears for that. Therefore, we are able to stand before Him.

So I challenge you to go before the throne. We're covered in His righteousness. We have a reconciled relationship with the Father and we can go before Him. He welcomes us. He rejoices to see His children. Although Christ is our perfect example of humility when we fail—guess what? We can still go before the Father because He understands. He's there and He's faithful to lavish us with God's grace and His goodness.

In conclusion, we can know from the texts we have studied today that Christ did not come as an infant only to twiddle His thumbs until He was old enough to die for our sins. From the beginning, He was obtaining a righteousness for us. From His birth to His baptism to His death to His resurrection to His glorification—all of this is for us. These were not the lost years of Jesus when He was wandering as some mysterious figure. Rather, these were the preparation years of Jesus, as He prepared to become our Savior and Mediator. These were the years when He prepared Himself to die on a cross and draw all men to Himself. During the time when Christ obtained righteousness for us, He became our perfect example of humility. He became our perfect sympathizing Mediator, so that we might boldly approach the throne of grace.

Therefore, Christians, this week and the rest of your life, when Satan the accuser comes to you and points his finger at your sin, just know it is Jesus Christ Who declares to us—and to the Father—"I will cover them with My righteousness and teach them a new way of living according to My example. And when they stumble, when they fail in their sins, I will intercede for them, because I know and I've experienced their temptation and sorrow. So for the sake of the Father's love for Me, I will justify them. I will sanctify them. I will advocate for them."

This is what we celebrate today at the Lord's Table. We celebrate Christ's life and His death. Thank you for observing with me this preparation period. I hope I've given you something to think about and ponder on—the teenage years of Jesus and how maybe He can help you through your teenage years, as well as your adult years of life.