

Jesus

Creation to Conclusion Series, June 12 & 13 | Hebrews 10:11-18

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DOES WORK THAT'S NEVER "DONE" WEAR YOU DOWN?

"Fred the Baker" certainly thought so.

"Fred the Baker" was a character in a series of Dunkin' Donuts commercials from the early 1980s through the late 90s.

His catch phrase was, "Time to make the donuts."

Early in the morning, his alarm clock would go off to get him out of bed to make donuts. Then in the evening, he was back at the store making donuts. In one commercial, Fred the Baker was leaving his house to make the donuts and met himself coming in from making the last batch.

The idea was that Dunkin' Donuts were always fresh and in lots of varieties.

The problem was that the work was never "done." It was always "time to make the donuts."

Personally, I like to work and do things.

I always have a to-do list going of things I want and need to do.

What I really like is getting things done and checking them off my to-do list. It feels so good!

Work that's never done wears me down quickly.

You may be surprised to find that there was work that was never "done" in the Bible.

The work had to happen, and it had meaning and impact.

However, it never fully accomplished its purpose, so it was never "done."

Why was it never "done?" No one on earth could accomplish what needed to be done.

Consequently, the work had to be done over and over again. It was always "time to make the donuts." Until Jesus because...

JESUS DID WHAT NO ONE ELSE COULD.

Hebrews 10:11 tells us that a priest's work is never "done":

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

Hebrews 10 points us back to the work of the priests in the Tabernacle and then in the Temple.

When the priests served, they stood; standing is a posture of reverence, respect, and asking.

The priests standing before the Lord would offer regular sacrifices. The sacrifices would involve the killing of animals, plus offering various parts of the animals (as well as other things) that usually involved burning them with fire.

The sacrifice was a reminder that sin leads to death and atoned for the worshipper's guilt.

Every day the priests would offer sacrifices. Every morning they would offer a year-old lamb, along with grain and wine, in a burnt offering. Every evening they would do the same. And that was just the beginning of the day's sacrifices, essentially setting the table for the day.

Those sacrifices did work. However, sin was never fully paid for, guilt was never fully removed, and humans and God were never fully reconciled.

Consequently, the work was never "done." The sacrifices had to start again the next day. It was always "time to make the donuts."

By contrast, Hebrews 10:12-14 tells us that Jesus' work is "done":

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Jesus is the only **perfect person** to do this work. Jesus is unique in that he is eternally the Son of God. He becomes the only perfect person to do the work of paying for sin, atoning for guilt, and reconciling human beings to God because he took on human nature. That solves the dilemma that a human had to pay the price, but only God could pay a price that high.

Jesus was the **perfect priest** because he never sinned.

Jesus, the perfect priest, offered himself up as the **perfect sacrifice** on the cross.

Now the work of offering sacrifices is "done," meaning that it never has to be done again.

Consequently, in Hebrews 10:15-18 we find that we get a new heart:

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Next, we start to see the benefits that come to us because the work of sacrifice is done.

Jesus' sacrifice is part of a massive shift whereby God replaced the old covenant with a new.

Hebrews 10 notes two massive shifts from God's old covenant with us to the new covenant.

Shift #1 is that God will put his law on our hearts and minds. It will be hard-wired into us by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Shift #2 is that God will not remember our sins any longer. Our sin is completely forgiven.

Jesus did all of that.

On top of that, we discover elsewhere that we get a new relationship with God.

Hebrews 10 doesn't cover this, but we've covered it before.

We are adopted as sons and daughters of God. **1 John 3:1** says:

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

The bottom line is that we get new life.

Sin and death came into the world in the Fall because of Adam, the first human being.

Jesus reversed what Adam did. Jesus obeyed God perfectly, died to pay the price for sin, and brought life (new life) back into the world.

Romans 5:17 says:

For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

To say that we have new life through Jesus means that we have a different quality of life right here and now, *and* that we get eternal life with him in the Resurrection.

So here is the big truth from salvation history: Jesus did what no one else could do.

In this series, Creation to Conclusion, we are identifying the big truths.

We're also looking at how those big truths fit together and how we can share them.

Plus, we're looking at how we apply these truths to our lives. So, how do we apply the truth that Jesus did what no one else could do to our lives?

MEASURE THE VAST MERCY GOD HAS GIVEN US.

Mercy is when we don't get what we deserve.

Mercy can be mercy only when one person has another in their power or authority. The person with the power could be God or a human being.

Mercy essentially means then that the powerful person pardons or forgives the less powerful person for something the less powerful person has done—a crime, an affront, or a transgression. The person in the driver's seat may mitigate or lessen the penalties that the other person has earned.

At times, mercy can even involve blessings.

However, mercy is basically when we don't get what we deserve, particularly from God.

To measure the vastness of God's mercy, we need to appreciate the seriousness of sin. What is sin?

1. Sin is any thought, word, or deed that disobeys God's commands.

Romans 3:23 says that we have all sinned:

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...

2. Sin is rebellion that ruptures our relationship with God.

Psalms 5:4 declares that God will not have sin in his presence:

For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.

3. Sin is bondage that leads to guilt, death, and hell.

James 1:14-15 describes the path:

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Jonathan Edwards painted a dark picture of the seriousness of sin.

Jonathan Edwards preached here in New England during the Great Awakening of the 1700s.

In the summer of 1741 he came to Enfield, Connecticut, to preach a sermon we call "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

That sermon paints a vivid picture of the seriousness of sin and of the wrath of God.

Edwards wrote:

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire ... you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes, as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours.
- Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

Edwards is frequently criticized or even lampooned for painting such a dark picture of God, of God's wrath, and of the serious consequences of sin.

There may be some aspects that are not quite right. God's wrath is always tempered by and paired with his love. God is never eager to condemn us for our sin.

However, if we think that Jonathan Edwards was totally wrong, we don't yet appreciate our situation.

2 Corinthians 5:10 says that we will all face judgment before Jesus in the future:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Revelation 20:15 says that if we do not have our name written in the book of life (if we are not followers of Jesus), then our future is in a lake of fire:

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

2 Thessalonians 1:9 makes it clear that any future judgment we receive will last forever:

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might ...

We have already received mercy and are always receiving mercy.

The Bible made it clear in the beginning that sin would lead to death.

Romans 6:23 reaffirms that:

For the wages of sin is death ...

Paul tells us definitively in **Ephesians 5:6** that God's wrath does indeed burn against sin:

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Sin is serious stuff. The outcomes of sin are serious. God's wrath against sin is serious.

When we experience anything other than serious, serious consequences for sin, then the one who is in power is pardoning, forgiving, mitigating, and withholding the consequences that are ours. THAT'S MERCY.

For people to hear the Gospel, we must help them understand mercy.

Most people begin with the assumption that they don't deserve what they get. They hear about things like wrath, judgment, and hell, and think, "I don't deserve that! Really bad people do, but I'm not a really bad person, so I don't!"

What most people don't realize is that the truth is that they don't get what they deserve. We all deserve wrath, but we don't get it right here and right now. We get mercy.

We must measure the vast mercy God has given us and help other people understand it, too.

GRASP THE IMPLICATIONS OF GOD'S GRACE.

Grace is when we get what we don't deserve.

Grace is an undeserved blessing. It's a gift.

Grace is usually bestowed on people by God.

It's the way God redeems, sanctifies, and glorifies us, his people.

By grace, God loves us, reaches out to us, forgives us, brings us into his family, remakes us, and gives us a purpose and role in his Kingdom. That's the grace God offers us.

We could have grace, but we usually put on masks.

Masks are the disguises we put on to help us manage the ways that other perceive us. We show people the face we want them to see—our happy, successful, fulfilled face. We even think we show God the face we want him to see—the face that just might convince him that he got a pretty good bargain when he made us his son or daughter.

Masks hide who we really are. Masks hide our pain, our flaws, and our failures.

Masks give us the illusion of control in our lives.

We work hard to maintain appearances.

The harder we work, the more we become control freaks and approval addicts.

Wearing a mask is the very opposite of grasping the implications of God's grace.

A seminary professor confronted me about my own mask-wearing years ago.

I was taking a class that involved distance learning and two weeks of in person instruction time.

The class was all about understanding who we are as pastors and as followers of Jesus, so that we could be effective at using the gifts God had given us to serve him.

I learned so much about myself during that class. I was finally honest about myself in that class. I was honest about my strengths and weaknesses, my successes and failures, my hopes and fears. It felt incredibly liberating.

I started to take off one mask after another during that class.

The last day of class I gave a presentation. My flight home was right after the class, so I was dressed for the flight.

After my presentation, my professor looked at me and said, "I see you put your pastor clothes back on." He wasn't just talking about my outfit either. I had a few of my masks back on. I was trying to earn my worth and prove my worth and manage my reputation again.

I think about that day frequently.

Can we grasp the implications of God's grace and take our masks off?

Jesus' sacrifice to pay for our sin is done. By grace, God has forgiven us.

If we have accepted Jesus, then we are adopted as beloved sons and daughters of God.

It didn't happen because we earned it. It didn't happen because we were good enough or because we would become good enough.

God loves us because he loves us. It's a gift.

God forgives us because Jesus died to pay the price for our sin. It's a gift.

God adopts us because he wants us to be his children. It's a gift.

Let's accept it, enjoy it, appreciate it, and share it.

SHARE THE TRUE STORY OF SALVATION.

Jesus is the star of salvation history!

In Chapter 1: Creation, Jesus was the driving force and the motivating plan behind creation.

In Chapter 2: Brokenness, when we sinned, God did not walk away from us or wipe us out. (That's mercy.) When we could not repair the damage we had done, God had a plan: Jesus.

Here in Chapter 3, we see that Jesus is the person who served as the priest who paid the price.

In Chapter 4: Church, Jesus will pour out the Holy Spirit on us, bind us together in a family, send us into the world, and get great glory as we make and multiply disciples for him.

Then in Chapter 5: Return, Jesus is the one who will return and reign forever as he resurrects heaven, earth, and us.

Jesus is the star of salvation history!

We have a graphic that can help you to explain the Good News from Creation to Conclusion.

You've seen that graphic in our videos, in our backgrounds and on our stickers for this series.

The idea is that if you can picture the drawing, you can remember the big chapters in salvation history. If you can remember the big chapters, then you can share them with someone else.

The first part of the graphic is a simple circle. It stands for "creation." It represents the world God created and the fact that God created this world as a place where we could relate to him.

Then you draw a simple line down the middle of the circle. That line symbolizes brokenness. We disobeyed God; we sinned and rebelled against him. When we did, we broke our relationship with him and with each other. We brought death and brokenness into the world at the same time.

Then put a simple line across the one down the middle to turn it into a cross to symbolize Jesus, the perfect person to offer the perfect sacrifice to pay the price for our sin.

We'll cover the other parts of this graphic in the next couple of weeks.

I hope you want to share Jesus with others.

Jesus did what no one else could do.

Now mercy is available to other people; they don't have to get what they deserve.

Even better, grace is available as well; they can get forgiveness, new hearts, a new family, and new life. What could be better! I hope you want to share this with others.

However, first you must know Jesus yourself.

Of course, I mean that if you have never become a follower of Jesus, now is the time.

I also mean that I hope you know Jesus.

He's not just the star of the story of salvation history; Jesus is a real person.

I met him many years ago now. I know him personally and love him deeply.

What he has done for me personally is astounding, but as amazing as what he has done is, who he is is even better.

I hope you will get to know Jesus yourself.