Title: What is Good News?
Text: Hebrews 4:14-16

Biblical Problem: Why is Jesus greater than Moses and all other high priests/people?
Biblical Solution: Jesus is greater because he is able to sympathize with our weakness, but did not sin.

Contemporary Problem: The good news of the Gospel is deeper than salvation.
Contemporary Solution: Jesus as a relatable High Priest is part of that depth.

Thesis: Jesus is the Good News.

I. Intro
   a. The Gospel no one wants...
      i. What’s so good about it?
   b. The keyhole of the Gospel.
      i. Salvation is what opens the depth of the Gospel

II. Jesus understands our problems/struggles and is the answer to them.
   a. Hebrews 4:14-16

III. Proofs of Jesus relating and overcoming
   a. Rejection
   b. Temptation
   c. Loss
   d. Suffering

IV. Let Us Approach Him with Confidence
   a. Our God is accessible and relational
The last two sermons that I preached in front of you all were tough ones and challenging for me to preach on subjects that I am sure most pastors would not jump at to do, I was honored to talk on orphan Sunday two years ago, and last year on the persecuted church. Nothing says hey welcome to the team like hey tell people why they should adopt, and tell them to be ready to die, right? Today will hopefully be a bit more encouraging than those topics to you as it has been to me as I have studied and prepared this week.

We are going to be jumping all over the New Testament today, but we are going to start and end with Hebrews 4:14-16, so you can turn there and I’ll pray.

I’m going to be honest with you all, as always, but I’m going to be really transparent with you today in a lot of different ways, so I need to know that we are in this together and you are not going to yell at me or anything, because if you do I’ll just switch up my sermon right now to Numbers 1 where they counted the Israelites or Leviticus when there are some awesome details about how to deal with leprosy. So here it goes, I need you all to know this, I am a Yankees fan... I know, I know. Some of you are like that’s heresy, how can you be a Christian and like them? I get it. But it’s true. Do you know what I love about being a Yankees fan, other than the 27 world championships that no one else is even close to? I love the way that it puts strangers and I in the same boat right? That’s what’s so good about all sports, all teams, is that no matter who cheer for it gives you a shared experience with someone else. It gives you something to relate to with everyone else who likes the same team or sport! It even gives a Red Sox fan and me something in common... mutual hatred. This shared experience, means the most in the extreme highs, and the extreme lows (Philly fans you know what I mean).

In all honesty though the topic we are going to be covering today, is one that I have been wrestling through and struggling with for more than just this week, and if I really think about it goes deep into the reasons that I have struggled in my own faith during my own life. So let’s start with this question, what does the definition of the word “Gospel” mean. Well most of you probably know this, if so great, if not don’t worry you’re not the only one. The word Gospel comes from the word evangelion in the Greek. Which means “good news.” So when we read the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we are reading the good news that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John has to give to us. So far so good? I’m know I’m not as technical as Pastor Tim or Pastor Matthew, and that’s probably the only Greek word we will break down today, but what I want to do today is navigate through with you what is so “good” about the good news that we preach.

Think about it for just a moment what is so good about the good news? What is so good about the good news to you, to your family, to your friends, to those in our city, to those around the world? What is so good about it? If you are like me and probably millions of other people in America, your answer is probably something along the lines of “Jesus died for our sins, so that we could have eternal life with God.” Right? Something close to that? And guess what you are absolutely correct. That is part of the Gospel; in fact believing that opens the door to a whole new world, kingdom, and way of life. It is the tip of the iceberg, the key that unlocks
a relationship that will transform everything about your life. Salvation is the foundation for the rest of the Gospel, but that’s just it there is so much more to the gospel than salvation, there is so much more good news!

If we think about where the world is today, where America is today, where the people who don’t know Jesus are, the way that they think about life. The salvation part of the Good News is irrelevant and they honestly don’t care. If you were to say to someone, “Jesus died for sins and came back to life, so that you could go the Heaven.” They would look at you first like you’re crazy and then say, “Who cares? That doesn’t sound all that good to me. What does that do for me now?” The salvation message is one that people are not interested in hearing, they don’t necessarily believe they need saving, or that Jesus is the one that can save them, and I think we have some blame in that, because our understanding of the Gospel of what Jesus offers us is shallow, is void of relationship, and realizing that Jesus relates to every part of our own life. Which brings us to Hebrews, chapter 4.

Verses 14-16 says this, “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 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 the time of need.”

The context leading up to this point in Hebrews in a nut shell, because this is one of the most rich and dense books in the NT is this, the author has set up Jesus as greater than Moses and we should be eager to follow him and hold fast to him rather than turn back to our old life like the Israelites did. We as Christians need to understand that Jesus is better to our old life in every single way, that turning back to our old life instead of holding on to Him will only cause more strife and turmoil within our souls.

So again salvation, the confession that Jesus is the Savior of the world, that he is the only one that can restore our relationship with God through his death and resurrection is the foundation of our confession, of the confession that Hebrews is talking about is the foundation, but it doesn’t stop there. It goes on to say that we can hold on to this truth, because Jesus, our High Priest, has been there and done that. The meaning of sympathy is “to have fellow or common feeling, or to understand the feelings of another.” And the Greek word tempted is both used to describe being tempted to bring one down, or to build one up. Okay so I lied there’s two more word breakdowns. Jesus understands and has felt all of our temptations the internal ones and the external ones. He understands every part of this life that we are living the good and the bad, and has overcome the bad and brings color, meaning, and depth to the good.

So yes salvation is good news, but the whole person of Jesus is the best news. The person of Jesus brings salvation, but he also brings relationship, shared experience, and hope. At the beginning of this sermon I mentioned sports and the huge following that they bring, the fans and how easy it is for someone to get sucked up into that world. It’s because it is a
narrative that allows people to share in the experience, to have relationship with strangers and something bigger than themselves, and there is always hope sprinkled in because anything could happen, and there is always next year! This is what Jesus offers to us as well, but I don’t think we even realize it or sit in the truth that is, Jesus is real, and he has shared and is sharing through his Spirit every experience we have, and he offers a real hope that says in the end we will win, 100% guaranteed. That’s what Hebrews 4 presents to us, that’s what Jesus offers to us. So with the rest of our time I want to look at some instances in Jesus’s life that allow us to see just how he relates and sympathizes with us in some difficult parts of life, and how that is good news.

So what are some of the major issues that we feel that we would think Jesus was never tempted with? If we take scripture seriously there will be none right? And we are talking about the underlying issues here not specific ones right, for instance we can pretty clearly say that Jesus wasn’t tempted with being addicted to his cell phone, but we can say that He was tempted by distractions, and reliance on things and people other than God. We can also clearly say that Jesus wasn’t tempted with online pornography, but he was tempted by lust. He wasn’t tempted with road rage, but was by anger, and selfish hurry? Although maybe he was when he was riding in on the donkey and some left lane camel cruiser wouldn’t get over. Who knows, but we all get the idea right? In all of these situations Jesus was faced with an opportunity to give into sin, but did not. He overcame them, but his sympathy goes beyond sin, into all temptations and tests of life, remember the Greek word for temptation is used to talk about things that are meant to bring us down and build us up, which really covers all situations we will go through in life.

What are some of the worst feelings that you have felt in your life? Fear? Loneliness? Rejection? Abandonment? Friendless? Betrayed? Hurt by others? Your friends gossip behind your back, or you feel like you don’t have any friends. You get fired or don’t get the job that you applied for. Your mom or dad left you and your family when you were young. Your boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife has cheated on you. You were bullied and made fun of in school. You didn’t fit in with the “cool” kids. We’ve all been there right? In one way or another these feelings of rejection, abandonment, and betrayal have happened to us?

For me one of the times that I felt this the most was when I was in middle school. I had just moved from Kansas to Ohio, and I was going into the 8th grade. In Ohio the town I had moved to was small my graduating class was about 160-180ish, and all of these kids had grown up together, people don’t really move in or out of that area. Anyways the first couple of kids my age I met were girls, and we became friends, so on the bus ride home I would just with them or near them. Well I guess some of the guys weren’t too happy about that or maybe they just really didn’t like me, because everyday for probably 2-3 months when I rode that bus home they would clap as I got off the bus. They were glad that I was leaving. I would never let any of them know or show it, but it crushed me, and honestly I never felt like I was accepted there by most people, almost all of my relationships were shallow and guarded no matter how hard I tried.
So you know what is good news to me now, and when I realized it in high school, is that Jesus went through that too. Jesus knows that pain, and really even more than that because his hometown tried to kill him. In Luke chapter 4:16-30, Jesus is teaching in the synagogue in Nazareth (his home town). The people there know Jesus; they say “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?” I imagine that these are the dads of some of Jesus’s friends growing up, and his friends are the too. He is teaching to people that he has seen day in and day out for 30 years. He played games with, laughed with, enjoyed meals with some of these people. And now he is teaching them and at first they like what he says, but then when he says that they are going to get mad at him and reject him which will make him leave. They get mad at him and try to kill him, so he leaves. And then in Mark 3 we see that Jesus’ own family, his mom and brothers think that he is crazy and try to bring him home.

I think it is so easy for us to think of Jesus as this stoic, no feeling, all business kind of guy, but that’s not the picture that the Bible paints for us at all, it’s not how real life works. We all have feelings, we all have to deal with tough things, and Jesus was no exception. So what did he do in these instances? Because although it is good to just know that Jesus gets how I’m feeling, how you feel in those instances it is even better to see him overcome them and promise that we can too. So Jesus overcomes this rejection and betrayal (which he will feel several times throughout his life) by doing two things, He relies on the Spirit of God and those people in his life that are doing the will of God.

Right before he is rejected in his hometown, Jesus had spent 40 days in the desert and was tempted by the devil, and after he went through that the Bible says that angels came to him and ministered to him, and he left the desert in the power of the Spirit. In His rejection Jesus understood that He truly never is alone, and that his Heavenly Father will not abandon him.

Then when his family comes to him not once, but twice to reign him in because they thought he was crazy, he looks at those around him, his disciples and says these people who are following the will of God and support me in my pursuit of his will are my true family. Jesus understood that God will not go through this world, or do his will alone. He gives us His spirit, and others that are following him to encourage us.

God has made the same promises to us who follow Jesus that we are not alone in this fight against the temptations of the world. He has promised us his spirit in [John 14](https://bible.com/bible/1598/en/jhn.14.16-20.1)

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

And Jesus’s last words before he left this world are a promise that he is with us,

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
And unlike the world, when everything else seems to fall apart and there is nobody by our side, God has given us the Body of Christ both in the world now and those who have come before us to encourage us to overcome our temptations and trials.

Hebrews says this in chapter 12, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...”

So as I was walking off of that bus everyday in 8th grade, I wish I would have ran to Jesus. I wish I would have understood that He had felt the same things as me. I would have been less likely to run to people pleasing, to changing whom I was to fit in. I wish I would have ran to the good news that is Jesus as sympathizer.

Maybe it’s still not clicking with you though, maybe you haven’t felt alone or rejected or betrayed? You sitting there still thinking I’m not sure Jesus has ever felt pain like I have, that he has ever suffered as much as I have, that he knows what it’s like to lose as much as I have. If that’s you there is good news for you too. I think this more than anything is the good news that those outside the church need to hear as well, Jesus does know what it’s like to suffer, to feel pain, to feel loss, to be wronged, he wasn’t the exception to these terrible parts of life that a lot of people feel. I’m going to show you how in a minute, but I really want you to think for a minute again about what is so good about the good news of salvation, the “Jesus died for your sins, so you could go to heaven,” part of the Gospel to someone who has been sexually abused, who has been forced into child labor, who has been oppressed by others, who is treated differently because of their skin color, gender, sexual orientation? What is so good about that? Again I think it is good news, and it is the key to the rest of the Gospel, but it is NOT the entire Gospel, it is not all of the good news.

The good news to those people is that Jesus can relate. Jesus has been oppressed, treated terribly just because of who he is, Jesus has felt the deep sorrow of loss, he has suffered terrible things.

In John 11 we see that one of Jesus’s best friends Lazarus dies, and what is Jesus’s response before he does anything about it. He weeps. He looks around and realizes that life on this planet is not how it is supposed to be. Death was not supposed to happen, and his heart was broken not only because he had lost a great friend, but because people didn’t see that he was the answer to the death and decay that is a part of the world.

Then we talk about someone who was pronounced innocent by the government, had not done anything wrong, but still underwent the worst brutality imaginable. He was whipped, spit on, mocked, stripped naked, had thorns shoved into his head, made to walk up the streets to be seen by everyone, and ultimately killed in the most brutal way imaginable at the time. Life did not end easily for Jesus Christ. He was not exempt from the depravity of this world, because he was the Son of God, but rather he took the brunt of it because of who He was.
So what is the good news there, because honestly it may be tough to see sometimes, and it even was for Jesus as he cried out to his dad, “My God, My God why have you forsaken me?”

The good news is that Jesus has the unique ability to walk alongside those people who have suffered more than most of us can ever imagine and show them his scars, and say, “I have them too.” He has the ability to wrap his arms around them and weep with them as they tell him about their oppression and mistreatment because he has felt it too. And then after weeping with them now he says, “Follow me, come with me, love me, trust me, and one day, I will wipe away every tear form your eyes, and death will be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, nor suffering, nor oppression, nor racism, nor murder, nor drugs, nor addiction, nor gossip, nor depression, nor anxiety, nor loneliness, for the former things have passed away, they will all pass away.”

Let me end with two things a encouragement and a challenge. I’ll give you the challenge first: Jesus has given us the privilege of being his hands and feet here and now. We have a responsibility to walk alongside others as they get to know the person of Jesus through us. It is our job to go from here know the depth of the good news, and give it to others. It is good news that says to a person that Jesus understands you, sympathizes with you, and died and came back to life so that you can be free from the bondage of sin and one day live in a world where none of this suffering and pain exist. Let’s be people of sympathy, like our Savior is a person of sympathy. The world needs some good news and we are the only ones that have it.

And the encouragement is this, verse 16 from Hebrews 4.

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need.”

Because of Jesus, we have the promise that we can go to the very throne of God with every part of our life, the good, the bad, and the ugly and He will give us mercy and grace when we need it. We have a God who has felt what we feel, been where we are, and has promised to give us what we need to get through it all.

Jesus is the good news of the Gospel. Amen.