



Small Group Notes - 'Jesus is Better'  
St Mary's and Sale West  
February 2025



# JESUS IS BETTER

Is Jesus enough? Is Jesus really God's best answer to all needs in the world?

Whilst writing these notes I have also been preparing for Easter. Yesterday I was talking with our Children, Youth and Families (CYF) Team as they prepare for a mission week with schools after Easter. We were talking about the incredible resurrection encounter in Luke 24. Two disciples, shellshocked from the events of Holy Week, make their way from Jerusalem to the neighbouring village of Emmaus. A stranger joins them on the walk, and we, the readers, are told it's the risen Jesus but, for some reason, the disciples don't recognise him. We are told that Jesus then 'explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.' Luke doesn't give us specifics of what was said but as we chatted about this encounter we really wished that Luke had given us more or even that we were there ourselves to hear this teaching.

Reflecting on that I realised that the letter to the Hebrews, by an unknown author, is perhaps the closest we will get to that conversation with Jesus, and to understanding how Jesus fits in with the rest of scripture, how the Old Testament prophets, priests, and sacrificial system all point to him. We are told that when Jesus explained this on the road to Emmaus he started with Moses and all the prophets; did he tell them how he is better than Moses, the prophets, and even the high priests?

As Jesus spoke to two downcast, maybe fed-up, scared, discouraged, certainly confused disciples their hearts burned within them as they understood how Jesus fits in and is better. No doubt the original readers of Hebrews felt the same sensation as they received the letter in the midst of their pain and suffering, with their confusion and questions as well as their joys and excitement.

As we approach and travel through Lent we will be looking together at the book of Hebrews and the truth that Jesus is better!! He is better than anyone or anything else, in every way. He is a better helper, he is a better priest, he is better than anyone who went before him (or since), he offers us a better hope, better promises and so on. Through life we often settle for things that are less than best. We are tempted to listen to, or put our trust and hope in, things that might be good but not best. We might even put our hope and trust in things that cannot be trusted. Take religion for example, many people including some Christians look to religion to save them; religion isn't bad but should point us towards Jesus because being religious doesn't save us but Jesus does. He is better.

As we journey towards the great celebration of Easter, let us have Jesus front and

centre in our minds. Let us marvel at who he is, what he has done and how he is better than anyone or anything else and that, because of him, our present and future is better too. May we too have hearts burning within us because we have Jesus, who is better!

# JESUS IS BETTER

A Better Helper

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## INTRODUCTION

If you have access to the internet and the means to show it to everyone then you might like to watch the Bible Project's overview on Hebrews:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fNWTZZwgbs&t=242s>

## READ

Read Hebrews 1 & 2

## DISCUSS

1. What is your understanding of angels, their purpose, and what they do? Think through as many scripture passages you can think of that involve angels. (Some passages to help if needed: angels appear to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Balaam, Gideon, Manoah and his wife, Mary, Joseph...)
2. However, the focus of this passage and study is on Jesus, not the angels!! So what is the author trying to do by saying Jesus is superior than the angels?
3. There are seven ways in which Jesus is described in v.2-3. What are they? Which one stands out to you the most? Why?
4. Jesus sustains all things, how does he sustain you? Can you give examples of when you have known/felt God sustaining you? (v.3)
5. Name some things that people value in this life that will eventually wear out. How do we begin to value them less and Jesus more? (v.10-12)
6. How do we "pay much closer attention to" the message of Jesus? What disciplines have you established in your life to make certain that you pay close attention and not "drift away"? (Ch 2:1-4)
7. Jesus is a better helper because He understands. (v.14-18) What does that mean for you today knowing that Jesus understands what you are facing at the moment?

## PRAY TOGETHER

Spend time praying for one another to Jesus, who understands your situations, who is the best helper.

# JESUS IS BETTER

Better than Moses

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## INTRODUCTION

Is there a time when you found rest and peace in an unexpected place or situation?

## READ

Read Hebrews 3:1 - 4:13

## DISCUSS

1. How does the writer of Hebrews describe the relationship between Jesus and Moses in verses (3:1-6)?
2. What was the significance of Moses to the original readers (presumably Hebrew)? How does that impact on how we are to perceive Jesus today? Does our thinking on who Jesus is line up with our actions?
3. What lessons can we learn from the Israelites' disobedience and unbelief (3:7-9) How can we apply the warning about hardening our hearts and unbelief to our lives today?
4. How does the concept of 'rest' offered by Jesus in Hebrews 4:1-13 differ from the rest promised in the time of Moses?
5. What does entering God's rest look like for us in our daily lives? What prevents us from entering the rest that is offered?
6. How does the superiority of Jesus and the rest He offers affect the way we deal with life's challenges and anxieties?

## PRAY TOGETHER

Spend time praying for one another.

# JESUS IS BETTER

A Better Priest

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## INTRODUCTION

Can you think of a time when you needed help or support but were hesitant to ask for it? How did you eventually find the courage to seek assistance?

## READ

Read Hebrews 4:14-5:10

## DISCUSS

1. What does it mean for Jesus to be our great high priest who has ascended into heaven?
2. In the 'Prayer of Humble Access' in the communion liturgy we pray these words, 'We are not worthy even to gather the crumbs from under your table...' How does that contrast with what we read in Hebrews 4:14-16? When you approach God, what posture do you tend to adopt? Why? What prevents us from approaching God's throne with confidence as Hebrews says we can?
3. What qualities of the high priest's role are highlighted in Hebrews 5:1-10 and how do they apply to Jesus? Where do you find comfort/encouragement?...Knowing that Jesus is our high priest?
4. There is now no need for distinct roles of Priests because all believers are priests. How do we imitate Christ in our role as priests, how do we live it out each day? (1 Peter 2:4-10 & Roman 12:1)
5. How does Jesus' empathy and compassion, his obedience and suffering, serve as an example for us to follow in our own lives?
6. How does understanding Jesus as our high priest impact the way we pray and seek God's help in times of need?

## PRAY TOGETHER

Take time to approach Jesus' throne with confidence, praise him that he is our high priest, the sacrifice he has made and bring your requests for help and support to him.

# JESUS IS BETTER

Take hold of what is better

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## INTRODUCTION

Can you share a time when you had to persevere through a difficult situation? What helped you stay motivated and keep going?

## READ

Read Hebrews 5:11-6:20

## DISCUSS

1. The writer of Hebrews is urging and challenging the readers to keep putting in the effort with their faith. How can we make sure we're always growing in our faith and not just staying comfortable with where we are? What steps can we take to move from spiritual "baby food" to "solid food"?
2. There is an expectation for those who are followers to become teachers. What do you think is meant by this? How is/could this expectation (be) expressed in your own life?
3. Can we lose our salvation or is it once saved always saved? What does this passage say and how do we understand it with what we know from the rest of scripture? (FYI – this is a big theological topic that has been debated for centuries, whilst it is good to wrestle with you may not have an agreed answer, that is ok.)
4. How can we make sure we stay committed to our faith and don't become complacent? Can anyone give examples of when they have gone away from Jesus, or almost given up but held on or came back? What helped you to hold on, or what led you to come back to him?
5. It says in Hebrews 6:15 that Abraham received what was promised but in chapter 11:13 we are told he died without receiving the promises. How do you explain this? Can we receive promises in different ways?
6. What are the promises of God that you particularly hold on to, ones that are specifically important now or have been in the past?
7. The passage says that Jesus is an anchor for the soul, what does this mean and how do we apply this understanding to the challenges we face in our lives?



## **PRAY TOGETHER**

Take time to pray for one another, that we would take hold and continue to cling to Jesus, our anchor.

### **Homework!**

We skip over Chapter 7, though some of you may want to study it privately then come back and give a 1 minute summary next time. Verses 1-24 may be complex and difficult to understand but verse 25 is wonderful to reflect on.

# JESUS IS BETTER

## A Better Promise

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*Did anyone look at chapter 7 this week and want to attempt to summarise it?*

### INTRODUCTION

What is the best 'life hack' you have heard which has really helped you? If someone could provide you a life hack for one problem or annoyance you face, what would it be?

### READ

Read Hebrews 8 & 9

### DISCUSS

1. What is the significance of Jesus being described as our high priest seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven? How does the ministry of Jesus as high priest compare to that of the earthly priests?
2. Why was the old covenant lacking? Does this mean that God made a mistake by introducing the first covenant? If not what was the purpose of the old covenant'?
3. We can look at worship in the Old Testament and accuse it of being ritualistic, we might even accuse other styles of church of the same today. If we are honest, even if we prefer more contemporary styles we can still approach our times of worship in a ritualistic way. In what ways can we ensure that our worship and relationship with God are not just rituals, but truly meaningful and transformative?
4. What does it mean that Jesus' blood cleanses our consciences from acts that lead to death? How can we practically live in the freedom and cleansing that Jesus' sacrifice provides? How can we support each other in our small group to embrace this truth?
5. Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice is the best life hack, we no longer have to keep repeating sacrifices of the old covenant. How can we live in the assurance and hope that Jesus' sacrifice provides? What can we do to remind ourselves and each other of the completeness of His work?
6. These two chapters cover ground that many of you will be familiar with but

what stands out to you reading them this time? What has God been saying to you/reminding you during this time?

## **PRAY TOGETHER**

Take time to pray for one another.

# JESUS IS BETTER

## A Better Hope

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### INTRODUCTION

When were you glad you overcame fear and did something you were afraid to do?

### READ

Read Hebrews 10

### DISCUSS

1. The previous 2 chapters and this one show how Jesus' death on the cross was the ultimate sacrifice, superior to all the sacrifices offered in the temple. Go through verses 10:1-18 and list all the limitations of the sacrifices under the old covenant and how Jesus' sacrifice is better.
2. Why is it 'impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins'? What is it about Jesus' sacrifice that works?
3. The author gives us three instructions in verses 22-25, what are they? What are some ways we put them into practice in our own lives, individually and collectively? What is the point of these instructions if Jesus has dealt with sin, why does it require a response?
4. When we understand that Jesus has fully forgiven all our sin - past, present, and future - we may wonder why it's a problem to continue in sin. Why should we stop sinning if God has already forgiven us? It may seem like a reasonable question, but it ignores the reason Jesus came to die. Look at verses 29-31 again. If we claim to follow Jesus, but nothing in our life changes, what do we have to look forward to?
5. Most of our hopes are unsure and can be left unfulfilled or taken away from us. Biblical hope is more than wishful thinking. Hope is the assurance that Jesus will fulfil his promises. If God makes a promise, he will keep it. We only have to wait for him to act. What does it look like to put your hope in Jesus?
6. In this chapter the writer is encouraging Christians to hold on to the better hope we have in Jesus. Read 1 Peter 3:14-16. What would be your answer when someone asks you to give the reason for the hope you have?

## **PRAY TOGETHER**

Take time to thank Jesus for the hope we have in him and for others come to know they have hope in Jesus too.

# JESUS IS BETTER

## A Better Blessing

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### INTRODUCTION

Has anyone run a marathon or taken on something similar. What did you do to prepare? What was it like when you actually ran it?

### READ

Read Hebrews 11-13

### DISCUSS

1. When we read chapter 11 and compare our lives with those mentioned it can make our lives feel uneventful and our faith small. Hebrews 12:1-2 explains that the author didn't write those down so we could look back and marvel at those gone before us but to motivate us to live courageously for Jesus. What is it that we are being urged to do in these verses and how intentionally do you set out to do it in your day to day life?
2. What is the imagery of the Christian life as a race trying to convey? What do you think might be impeding your progress in the race?
3. How does the writer of Hebrews describe God's discipline in these verses? In what ways can we view God's discipline as a sign of His love and care for us? How can we embrace and learn from the challenges and difficulties we face as part of God's loving discipline?
4. Looking at Hebrews 13:1-16, there are many short instructions. What does the author say here about blessing and loving others? How does it apply to you?
5. The author, having said everything they want to say, finishes with a benediction, a blessing. Unpack this blessing, what is the prayer of blessing over us, the reader, as we live in light of what we have read?
6. Look back over the weeks we have been looking at Jesus through Hebrews. Which of the many blessings of Jesus stands out to you in this moment? Why?

### PRAY TOGETHER

Take time to pray blessing over each other.

