

The Mediator (Lord's Day 6)

Reading: Hebrews 2:5-11

A bridge, like the Westgate bridge, stands as a link between 2 pieces of land...

It spans a gap and provides a connection.

It is firmly planted on both sides of the divide.

It is also a wonderful illustration of one of the truths of our Christian faith.

We worship a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is the link between heaven and earth.

He is the bridge that we need cross over.

He stands with one foot firmly planted in our human situation.

And the other foot is grounded in the reality and eternity of heaven.

We are united as believers by the truth that we have a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is...

At the same time...

Fully divine and Fully human.

Fully.

And the book of Hebrews illustrates it so well for us.

As one who is fully divine and fully human, He is able to function as a bridge, a link, a mediator.

People can move through Him across a chasm that otherwise is impassable.

We can have access to what otherwise is eternally out of reach...

adoption as children into the family of God;

and with that the promise of God's care throughout this life,

as well as the hope of glory and everlasting life in the presence of God.

In Jesus we have one who can fully identify with our human concerns, while providing divine strength and power to conquer the traumas of life, changing them into eternal triumphs.

It is a bible-based truth that is embedded in the teachings of our church tradition.

The Heidelberg Catechism is really clear on who Jesus is and his two distinct natures.

A string of Q &A to help us understand why this mediator had to be fully human and fully divine.

Look with me again at Q & A 18

Q: And who is this mediator - true God and at the same time truly human and truly righteous?

A: *Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was given us to set us completely free and to make us right with God.*

Jesus is truly God.

Jesus is truly human.

Both at the same time.

He has a divine nature, and a human nature..... both..... at the same time.

This is a difficult concept to accept and understand.

We can't really get our human minds around it...

It doesn't fit our rational thinking and understanding.

It's been a problem all through the history of the Christian faith.

It was the greatest issue that faced the early church as it brought the gospel to the world.

That issue is still around today.

People have always been tempted to move to one side of the equation or the other -- to say that *either* he is fully divine and just took on the shell, the outer appearance of a human being; being *like* a man - that's all

OR

He is as human as you and I, and just *seemed* to be divine, had a divine-like spirit overwhelm him, giving him some super-human-like qualities.

Not many years after the death and resurrection of Christ, a heresy called Docetism arose among some who said that Jesus' body only "seemed" to be real.

The Docetists believed that he could not feel pain, and that his body was spiritual so that if he walked on the sand he would not leave footprints; if he walked on grass the blades of grass would not bend over when he walked on them.

This was the opposite kind of heresy from the other heresy which said that Christ was not God — merely human.

They believed that he was not human at all — totally divine.

This was such a devious heresy because it sounded so spiritual while it robbed Christ of his humanity, and robbed us of the assurance that he entered our experience in the fullest sense.

If Jesus had not become one of us he would not have known what we feel.

We could never be sure if he really understood us.

More than that, if he had not become one of us, he could not have died in our place.

It is interesting to plot the progression in the creeds of the church.

The Athanasian Creed is the last of our creeds and is, wrongly, named after Athanasius who was a champion of orthodoxy against the attacks the church was under from those who tried to take Jesus out of the doctrine of God, particularly the trinity.

There is a strong focus on who Jesus is, as fully divine and fully human.
Read...pg 16 BoF

This teaching of Jesus being fully divine and fully human is such a core belief of our faith we need to be able to understand and wrestle with it.

We need to look at each side of the equation and see what light Scripture throws on it.

Jesus as Divine.

Let's begin with his divinity.
Jesus is divine, Jesus is God.

This is something radically different than other religious traditions with founders who claim to have an inside track *to* God, or to know lots *about* God, or to be something *like* God.

Jesus stared straight at those with whom he lived, and through the pages of the bible He stares straight at us and announces that He *IS* God.

Let me read what the writer to the Hebrews says in chapter 1:
'The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3)

Jesus is God.

John 1:1 reinforces this teaching:

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

Jesus is God.

It is precisely because of Jesus' claims to be God that the Jews tried to have him done away with.

Perhaps some scholars today get muddled about these claims.

But the average person in Jesus' day knew exactly what He was claiming about himself.

That's why many of them picked up rocks and tried to kill him, shouting "*blasphemy.*"

People who claimed to be God were to be killed.

So, please don't any of you leave here today content with thinking that Jesus was a great moral example and a fine teacher of ethics, but only that.

He himself taught that He was God.

Which means that if we choose to reject this truth we have to stare straight back at Jesus and label him for what he would be - a liar of the worst sort who knew better and shouldn't have made those claims..... or else, as C.S.Lewis puts it, a lunatic, in the order of someone who claims to be a turnip.

Jesus is a liar, a lunatic..... or Lord.

History records his claims. Claims repeated by writings like Hebrews 1.

And we can either accept them or reject them.

There's no other choice.

The Bible teaches Jesus as God...

Saviour for all who believe in Him,

giver of eternal life;

sovereign judge of all who reject Him.

Nothing wishy washy there - no room for complacency.

That's the one side of the teaching.

The humanity of Jesus:

Then the other side - that Jesus, who is fully God, is - **at the same time** - fully human.

That's the stuff of our reading in Hebrews 2.

See v.17?"...*he had to be made like his brothers in every way...*"

Jesus, God, has fully entered into the human experience.

He is fully anchored into it.

It's a tough teaching, and one that has caused many thoughtful, sensitive people to ask a whole host of questions.

Questions like: If he is really God, how could he possibly have been tempted?

Was evil attractive to him?

If so, how could he be truly sinless? If not, how could it tempt him?

Think of the temptations we face - pride, lust, tyranny, folly, laziness, despair.

Did he face those, too?

Did Jesus get sick?

When he was apprenticing in Joseph's carpenter shop, did he ever ruin a good piece of kiln-dried oak by cutting it crooked or too short?

Scripture makes it clear that Jesus was the perfect man ... but he was not Superman.

Superman could catch a bullet with his teeth or stand in a blazing fire untouched.

But Jesus Christ came to us in a vulnerable condition.
He became the author of our salvation through suffering.

When Jesus was cut, he bled.

When he was hit, he bruised.

When he was tempted, he felt the pull.

When he was rejected, he felt sorrow.

This is important because it means He is truly one of us.

In fact, He chooses to be our brother!

Look at verse 11: Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

"*Like his brothers in every way*" means precisely that - in *every* way.

Except he was without sin.

Philippians 2 tells us that when Jesus came to earth he "*made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*"

That's important. It means that the full glory of his divinity was hidden, layered beneath the humanity, subjected to it.

Jesus took risks in becoming human, he put aside some of the powers, rights, and glories that were his by right.

In order to come for us, he had to humble himself and take on the form of a human.

The Bible explains it this way: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:6-8).

Paul was continually in awe of all that Jesus gave up in order to be with us. He wrote to the Corinthians saying, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

As the Bible says, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman. . . that we might receive the full rights of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).

Jesus became human for us.

He did that deliberately because he *wanted to* and *had to* experience the full weight and struggle of being human.

He had to be fully grounded in the human experience, to walk the full path and never stumble, never sin, in order to be able to enter the Heavenly Courthouse and offer Himself as a stand-in for us...

as the one who would assume our guilt and sin,
and carry the punishment that would set us free to eternal life.

That first, and foremost.

But then also this...as one who has is fully human we are able to bring all our concerns and joys, our hopes and shattered dreams, the good and the bad... we can bring all those things to Jesus, because he understands fully what we are going through.

After all, he too lived a life on earth.

Jesus really was the perfect man.

Reading through the story of his life you see his enormous courage.

He stood against the powers of his day, both religious and political.

He single-handedly cleared the temple.

He stared death in the face and did not back down.

He endured beatings,

and willingly stayed on the cross through unimaginable suffering.

Yet he was one of the most sensitive men alive.

He was gentle.

He touched lepers.

He wept over lost people.

He took children into his arms to bless them.

He ministered to hurting people and spent long hours teaching and healing them.

He stayed up all night praying.

He died, then broke the grip of death in his resurrection.

He lives forever as that part of God who can never forget what it is like to be human.

That is true, and it can be a tremendous comfort to know that in times of difficulty there is one who understands us because he is one of us
and so we can safely dump on him.

When we are sick from the flu after 3 weeks of fighting it,
you can realize that Jesus knows what feeling sick and weak is like.

When you wrestle with lust when a beautiful woman walks past, you can pray for strength, remembering that Jesus understands the deep drive of human sexuality.

When tensions build and we are tempted to explode and lash out, we can approach a Saviour who truly appreciates the human desire to escape out from under difficult situations, who understands anger.

Jesus is fully, completely human.

I said at the beginning that a bridge is an illustration of the greatest of spiritual truths facing the human race.

Jesus...

Fully divine.

Fully human.

Jesus is our perfect and all-sufficient mediator.

Nothing and nobody else are needed or wanted to unite us with God.

He is the bridge from earth to heaven...because he is a true human being.

He is the bridge from heaven to earth, because he is truly God.

This perfect mediator was not invented by us...

He was given to us to set us completely free and to make us right with God.

This mediator is God's only open door.

All people enter here.

And so...

hanging firmly on that truth

united in that truth

we can go from here.

With this truth we have hope when we face the uncertainties and terrors that come crashing into our lives somewhere along the way;

this truth that can build our confidence and help us plug away in the mundane moments;

this truth that can enhance our joy in the times of happiness and success.

With this truth we can leave here.

For this truth we give thanks.