



Growth Group Curriculum Lent 2021
Week 1 – February 21, 2021 – Hebrews 1:1-6

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. In this time of the virus and social distancing, please meet safely outside or online. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

Setting the Context

The book of Hebrews differs from other books of the Bible in its tone, purpose, and emphasis. The opening line “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways...” immediately shows us that this text was written for communal learning and participation. The flow, cadence, and literary elements of this text suggest that it was written by a preacher for a congregation-like audience. It is not simply a lecture given, but rather a thoughtful sermon meant to be enjoyed and digested by the participants. The book of Hebrews leads us to a place of discussion that is based in faithful memory and hope for the future.

The first thing we learn about God in the book of Hebrews is that God speaks. God has proven himself to be active and present, not only in our lives, but in the lives of our ancestors. Humanity is privileged to be the conversation partner of a holy God. God’s word is not found by us, instead, it is a gift given to us at the right time by God. The word of God is not a constant stream of conversation; it is given at precise moments to specific people. In the same way that God’s speech was often mediated through an object or person (burning bush, angel, Moses etc...), the word of God met its ultimate mediator in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is introduced into this text in verse 2 when the writer says, “but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” The use of “but” in this context informs the listener that God is doing a new thing through his Son. The way that God used to speak is shifting and is now finding new meaning in Jesus. This shift sets the foundation for a theme found in the book of Hebrews: how God “used” to speak vs. how God now speaks “now.”

This theme can easily be interpreted as Old Testament God vs. New Testament God, or Judaism vs. Christianity, but this was not the intention of the author. The book of Hebrews was written for a community of believers who had become confused in their beliefs. They were lacking confidence in their ability to discern the voice of God and needed some insight into how the God of the Old Testament could now be seen in the person of Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, the voice of God came into a state of perfection and clarity.



The perfection of Jesus Christ and the culmination of his Word is detailed in verses 2-6. In these verses we find multiple praiseworthy characteristics of Jesus. All of the characteristics harken back to Old Testament themes and bring the Old Testament into a new light. The book of Hebrews reminds us of not only where we have come from as believers, but it illuminates where we are going.

Exploring the Text

Read Hebrews 1:1-6

¹ In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. ⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? ⁶ And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) The theme for our new sermon series is "Puzzled." We are going to be talking about how God puts the pieces together and how they find their completion in Jesus Christ. Do you like to do puzzles? What kind do you prefer to do? Jigsaw, Crossword, Sudoku?
- 2) The author of Hebrews begins this "sermon" by looking back to the past and considering how God had spoken to "our ancestors" of the faith. As you think about the Old Testament, what are some ways that God had spoken previously?
- 3) In your life and faith do you find yourself more often looking back on what has happened, or looking ahead to what will happen?
- 4) Once again, we read a text that emphasizes the importance of God's voice or God's word. In order for words to accomplish something, there needs to be a conversation partner. Do you see Scripture as a conversation partner, or as more of a lecture? Why?
- 5) What does it mean that God has spoken to us "by his Son" in verse 2? Is this referring to the words that Jesus spoke or something more?
- 6) In verses 2-3, there are seven descriptions given of Jesus (1. *heir of all things*, 2. *maker of the universe*, 3. *the radiance of God's glory*, 4. *the exact representation of his being*, 5. *the sustainer of all things by his*



powerful word, 6. the one who makes purification for sins, and 7. the one who sat down at the right hand of the Majesty). Which one or two of these speaks to you and why?

- 7) Why do you think the “preacher” brings up the issue of Jesus being superior to angels? The preacher began this conversation in verse 4 and continues it for the rest of the chapter. Why do you think this was important to talk about?

- 8) In his sermon Pastor Paul referenced Hebrews 12:12 which says, “Therefore strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.” In a sense the preacher is telling the believers to keep persevering. Where in your faith could you use some more strength? Where are you growing weary? How can your growth group be praying for you?

