

Well, good morning; how are we? Good, good! And a quick shout-out to all of you joining us in our online community. I'm so glad you are part of the Foothills Family and that you're with us in worship and studying God's Word from wherever—and whenever—you're tuning in. If we haven't had the chance to meet, my name is Doug; I'm one of the pastors here. I'll be out on the patio after service, and I'd love to connect with you, hear a bit of your story, and help you get connected however we can. So please come say hi.

Now, before we jump in, I want to celebrate something. We recently wrapped up our Membership Orientation, and today we get to officially welcome our newest members. So to those of you who completed the class—well done. We are grateful you're here.

And let me just say this for a moment, because I know some of you are thinking, "Membership? Why does a church even do that? Is there a punch card? Do I get discounts?" No, no discounts. And no punch card—though that might be fun. Membership isn't about special perks; it's really about commitment. It's about saying, "Foothills isn't just the church I attend... it's my spiritual home. These are my people. This is where I plant my life, where I grow, where I serve, and where I'm shepherded."

Membership is the way we say we're not just a crowd—we're a family. It's how we make sure people aren't floating around unanchored. And it's how we share responsibility together for the mission God has given this church. So to our new members: welcome. We're thankful for you, and we're excited to walk with you.

Alright—well, if you would, grab your Bible and open with me to the book of Hebrews, chapter 1. I'll be reading out of the ESV this morning as we kick off our new Advent series called "From the Manger to Majesty."

Now, as you're turning there, let me frame where we're going today. Because Hebrews 1 might not be the typical passage you expect when you think Christmas. There's no manger, no shepherds, no star, no Mary and Joseph... but what Hebrews does give us is the theological foundation that makes Christmas matter at all. Hebrews tells us who the baby in the manger actually is.

And that's important, because the original audience—mostly Jewish Christians, with a few Gentiles mixed in—were under pressure. They were tired. They were discouraged. Some were tempted to drift back toward the comfort of the old ways: the Temple system, the rituals, the old covenant rhythms they grew up with. And the author of Hebrews writes this sermon-letter to say, "Don't drift. Don't go back. You have something better. You have Someone better."

That's why chapter 1 opens with a thunderclap. It addresses the biggest questions on their minds:

Is Jesus really greater than the prophets we grew up revering? Is Jesus truly superior even to the angels—the messengers of God, the mediators of the Law?

Those are massive questions. And the way Hebrews answers them... it's bold. It's stunning. And if you hear it the way they heard it, it actually reframes Christmas entirely.

As we step into Hebrews this morning, listen to how the author begins. It's not soft. It's not sentimental. It's not seasonal. It's bold, and it lands with the force of a divine announcement. Here's how he opens the entire sermon-letter, let's read it together, Hebrews 1 verse 1: "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,

but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son..." (Hebrews 1:1-2a, ESV).

Let's just pause there for a moment, because that sentence is loaded. The author is writing to people who deeply revered the prophets. The prophets weren't just historic figures to the Jewish mind; they were the very mouthpiece of God. So, when Isaiah spoke, or when Jeremiah warned, or when Ezekiel cried out, God Himself was speaking to His people. And the scripture we just read acknowledges that—"God spoke... by the prophets." Not man's ideas. Not human speculation. Not philosophical musings. God spoke. Long ago, in many times, in many ways—through visions, dreams, symbols, stories, confrontations, poetry, and proclamations.

But now—what we're reading is that something has shifted. The text says, "But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son." See, the contrast is intentional and dramatic. It is as if the author is saying, "Yes, God spoke in the past—clearly, meaningfully, beautifully—but what has come to us now eclipses everything before it."

So, the prophets...do you hear it...prophet...profess, The prophets brought the Word of God. But the Son is the Word of God.

See, the prophets carried revelation like lanterns in the dark. But the Son is the very radiance of the light those lanterns pointed toward. What came before was true, but it was partial. It was broken up or fragmented. You can think of it like puzzle pieces scattered across the Old Testament. My friend Emma Koenigs is a crazy puzzler. The girl can build 1,000 piece puzzle freaky fast. And it's so cool to see the image come together. That's the Old Testament, the pieces of coming together as the prophets reveal more and more of the coming Messiah. But now, in the Son, the entire picture stands before us fully revealed.

And this is where Christmas comes into focus for us. Because when we look at the manger—when we picture this tiny, crying, vulnerable infant

wrapped in cloth—we are not simply looking at a moment of divine kindness or a symbol of peace on earth. We are looking at the moment when the eternal God, who spoke through prophets for centuries, stepped into human flesh and spoke through the presence of His own Son.

One of the early Church Fathers, Athanasius, a great theologian, once said about Jesus, “He became what we are that He might make us what He is.” Friends, Christmas is not merely about God sending a message; it’s about God coming Himself.

In my class, Old Testament Survey that we do each Sunday at 11am, we have been walking through the first several books of the Bible. And we have been seeing what extent God has gone to make it possible for us to have a personal relationship with Him where we are with Him. In the Garden of Eden, that’s how it was. That got jacked up. And then God starts working to make it possible for a broken, sinful, unholy, impure humanity to be able to dwell with Him again. It’s wild!

And Hebrews presses that home. Jesus coming is not about a message like what the prophets would give. It’s about God coming Himself to dwell with us! HELLO!

The author continues describing the Son: “...whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.” (Hebrews 1:2b, ESV). In other words, the baby born in Bethlehem is not just a child of promise—He is the heir of all creation. He is the One through whom God made everything. Before He lay in a manger, He spoke galaxies into existence. Before He cried as an infant, He thundered as the voice that said, “Let there be light.” Before Mary held Him, He held the universe.

Just let that settle into your Christmas imagination for a moment. We often think of Jesus’ life beginning in the manger. Hebrews gently but firmly corrects that. His earthly life began in Bethlehem, but His existence has no beginning. The manger wasn’t the origin of the Son; it was His

arrival into humanity. It was the eternal stepping into time. The Creator entering creation. The sustainer of all things allowing Himself to be sustained by a young mother's arms.

So when Hebrews says, "God has spoken by His Son," it isn't simply saying, "Listen to Jesus because His teachings are helpful." It's saying, "Pay attention—because the One who spoke creation into being now speaks to you in flesh and blood." Calvin wrote that God "was pleased to speak in a more open way only when He exhibited Himself in His Son." Meaning: Jesus is God's clarity. God's fullness. God's final word.

And the author's point is simple and stunning:
If you want to know what God is like, look at the Son.
If you want to know God's heart, listen to the Son.
If you want to know God's will, follow the Son.
If you want to know God's character, behold the Son.

The Son is God's definitive revelation to humanity.

And for the weary Christians hearing this letter for the first time—believers pressured by culture, pressured by persecution, tempted to drift back to the old patterns—this reminder cuts through the fog. "Don't drift," the author is saying, "because the One who speaks to you now is not a prophet, not a priest, not an angel—it is the Son Himself."

This is where the Christmas story truly begins. Before shepherds, before wise men, before Mary and Joseph—before any of that—the story begins with the eternal Son, the One through whom God spoke creation into existence, the One who reveals God perfectly, stepping into our world to speak to us in a way we could finally see, hear, and touch.

And Hebrews is just getting started.

The author has already told us that the Son is the One through whom God speaks, the One through whom God created the world, the One

who holds the story together. But now he raises the curtain even higher. Look with me at Hebrews 1:3. This is one of the most beautiful Christological statements in the entire Bible. It says, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." (Hebrews 1:3, ESV).

Just pause and breathe that in. "He is the radiance of the glory of God." He's not a reflection. Not a distant echo. Not a dim beam bouncing off something else. Radiance. He's the source. The outshining. The visible expression of the invisible God. When you see Jesus, you're not seeing God's representative – you're seeing God Himself revealed in a way our limited human senses can understand. It's why Jesus could say to Philip, "Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). The Son doesn't just point to God's glory – He radiates it.

Radiance is what the sun is to sunlight. You can't separate the two. You can't have sunlight without the sun, and you can't have the sun without it producing light. The radiance is the outshining of the essence. That's what the author is saying: You cannot have the Father without the Son, and you cannot know the Son without knowing the Father. They share the same glory. They share the same essence. They share the same nature. As the Nicene Creed–shaped by Athanasius and the early church–declared: "Light from Light, true God from true God."

And then he says, "the exact imprint of His nature." The Greek word there is *charaktēr*, where we get our word character. It was used for the imprint made by a seal in hot wax–the exact, precise impression left by the original stamp. Meaning this: if you want to know the character of God, look at Jesus. If you want to know the nature of God, look at Jesus. If you want to know how God thinks, how God loves, how God acts, how God responds, how God pursues, look at Jesus. Because He is the exact imprint of the divine nature.

The Son is the radiance and exact imprint of God's glory.

This is why we Christians know and believe Jesus is God—not because the early church invented it, not because councils made decisions for political power, not because someone misinterpreted a verse. We know Jesus is God because He is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact imprint of His nature. The author of Hebrews is not leaving room for “Jesus as a good teacher” or “Jesus as a moral example” or “Jesus as a spiritual leader.” No. He is God made visible.

And as if that wasn’t enough, the author goes further: “He upholds the universe by the word of His power.” Think about that. You and I can barely uphold our schedules. Some of us can’t keep track of where our keys are. We can’t get the laundry folded. But the Son upholds the universe—every atom, every star, every cell, every law of physics, every breath in your lungs—by His word. Not with effort. Not with strain. Not with exertion. But with a word. The same word that spoke creation into being sustains creation moment by moment.

Do you realize what this means? It means the One lying in the manger is the One holding the manger together. The One crying as a newborn is the One sustaining the lungs He’s crying with. The One wrapped in swaddling cloths is the One who clothed the lilies of the field. Church, Christmas is not the story of a helpless God—it’s the story of the God who holds galaxies choosing to take on the form of a helpless child.

And then Hebrews adds this remarkable phrase: “After making purification for sins...” Notice the timeline. Creation. Sustaining the universe. Radiating God’s glory. Revealing God’s nature. And then—He took on flesh, lived among us, went to the cross, and “made purification for sins.” Purification...that’s priestly language. It’s temple language. Sacrificial language. The prophets told us purification was needed; the priests performed the rituals pointing toward it; but the Son is the One who actually cleanses us.

It is only the Son who can bring purification for our sins.

And then this final line, check this out: "...He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." No priest ever sat down. In the temple there were no chairs. Why? Because the work of sacrifice was never finished. But Jesus – after making purification for our sins – sits. Not because He is tired. Not because He needs a break. He sits because the work is complete. Salvation is accomplished. The Son is enthroned.

Verse 4 then says, "having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs." Again, the author is speaking directly into their concerns. Angels, in Jewish tradition, were majestic, powerful beings involved in delivering the Law. But here we see that the Son is superior—infinately superior. He has a name more excellent than theirs. He is not merely a messenger; friends, He is the message. He is not merely a servant; He is the Son.

And remember: this is the Christmas story. The One wrapped in cloths is the radiance of God's glory. The One lying in a manger is the exact imprint of His nature. The One sustained by a mother's milk is the One upholding the universe by His word. The One born into poverty is enthroned at the right hand of Majesty. Christmas is not small. Christmas is cosmic. It stretches from eternity past to eternity future and lands in a manger in Bethlehem.

This is the Son revealed.

Now, before we close, I want to look briefly at how the author finishes this opening chapter. Because everything we've read so far builds to a peak in verses 5-14. We're not going to unpack every Old Testament quotation – we don't have time for that – but I want you to see what the author is doing. He strings together seven passages from the Psalms, 2 Samuel, and Deuteronomy to make one unmistakable point: no angel has ever been spoken of the way God speaks about the Son. Angels are servants. The Son is sovereign. Angels are messengers. The Son is the message. Angels stand before God. The Son sits at God's right hand.

Just listen to a few lines from this section. Verse 5: "For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'?" (Hebrews 1:5, ESV). Well, the answer: none of them. God has never said to an angel what He has said about Jesus. Jesus alone is the eternal Son.

Then verse 6 says, "Let all God's angels worship him." Do you realize what that means? The most glorious, powerful beings in creation – the ones who make shepherds tremble and prophets fall on their face – worship Jesus. They don't receive worship; they give it. They bow before the One lying in the manger. They look upon Him and say, "Glory to God in the highest," not because He is cute and wrapped in cloths, but because they recognize Him as the radiant Son who made them.

Then verse 8 might be the most staggering of all. Speaking of the Son, the Father says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." (Hebrews 1:8, ESV). Don't miss that. God the Father calls the Son 'God.' That is in your Bible. The writer of Hebrews is not giving us a subtle hint; he's giving us a thunderbolt. The Son is not a created being, not a high-ranking angel, not an exalted messenger. He is God.

And then the chapter ends with this contrast in verse 14. Speaking of angels, it says, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14, ESV). Angels serve. Angels obey. Angels assist. Angels minister. But the Son reigns. The Son rules. The Son is enthroned forever at the right hand of Majesty. The Son is worthy of worship, awe, and obedience.

So what is the scripture of Hebrews doing?

It is placing the Son in His rightful place – exalted above every prophet, every angel, every mediator, every messenger, every spiritual being. It is saying, "Fix your eyes here. Fix your hope here. Fix your Christmas here." Because if this is who Jesus is, then we aren't simply celebrating the birth of a child. We're beholding the arrival of the eternal Son of God.

And church, let me bring this home to your heart today. If Jesus is this glorious – if He truly is the radiance of God's glory, the exact imprint of His nature, the One who upholds the universe by His power, the One who purifies sins, the One who sits enthroned forever – then He is worthy of your trust. He is worthy of your worship. He is worthy of your life. And He is able to hold you, sustain you, carry you, strengthen you, and speak to you in a way no one else can.

Some of you are walking into this Christmas season weary. Some of you are walking in distracted. Some of you are walking in emotionally drained. Some of you are drifting spiritually and you know it. Church this passage in Hebrews calls you back – not with guilt, not with pressure, not with shame – but with a breathtaking vision of the Son. Look to Him. Don't drift. Don't let lesser things pull you away. Lift your eyes and behold the One who reveals God perfectly and loves you completely.

This is what Christmas is about.

This is what Advent invites us into.

This is the Son revealed.

This is the Word made flesh.

Let's worship Him!