

RESTING IN JESUS

Pastor Dillon Barber // December 14, 2025

Text: Hebrews 3; Matthew 11:27-30 (ESV)

Big Idea: The Jesus of Christmas invites us to rest in Him.

Welcome back to week 3 of our Christmas Series. Before we jump into our text, I want to take a moment to thank everyone for your generosity this Christmas season. Thank you for coming out to the Christmas Tree Lighting last Sunday. We had a packed house. Wall to wall full of people, the choirs were great and we raised a little over \$1800 to support our local school music programs. That event has become one of my favorite events of the year. Also, I want to thank everyone who gave generously for our coat drive. I don't have an exact count, but Brad said he bagged up 18 large trash bags (the 44gal size) and we sent all of those down to the Arabic Church in Sacramento for their outreach event this weekend. That's a lot of warm coats for the refugee community. Lastly, thank you for everyone who has adopted a family for Christmas. We are so grateful for your generous hearts.

This morning, we continue our Christmas series which is anchored in the letter to the Hebrews. As Brian said last week, this might seem like a strange choice but "Hebrews is perfect for Christmas because it exalts Jesus as the greatest revelation ever given from God."

[Context] We don't know as much about the context of this letter as we know about some of the other books of the Bible. For example, we don't know the name of the author, and we don't know exactly what community or congregation the author was writing to, so we have to make some observations from the letter that give us clues. What we find is that the original audience were Jewish people, Hebrew people, who were intimately familiar with their Jewish heritage, with the Old Testament, and with the practices of Temple Worship that were at the heart of Judaism. We also know that the recipients were under intense pressure to walk

away from their faith and return to temple sacrifices and observance of the Jewish laws.

So the whole letter is written to persuade the readers to hold firm to their faith in Jesus and not turn back to the old ways of Judaism. It really is an appeal to keep the faith under persecution and pressure. And the author does it by exalting Jesus as greater than everything that Judaism had to offer. For example, in Chapters one and two Jesus is greater than the angels, today we will see how Jesus is greater than Moses, later in the letter, he is the mediator of a greater covenant and so on. And interspersed between these “greater” arguments are clear warnings to the church, not to turn away.

In chapters one and two the author explained that **Jesus is the very son of God, the exact imprint of his nature, the one who holds all things together with the power of his word, he is far superior to the angels.** Secondly, he is fully human. Last week Brian explained that **Jesus was a human being, born of a woman, born into a human body and experienced all the hard things that we all experience and even more, so that he could be our perfect representative and make propitiation of our sins.** The only way he could be our substitute, is to be one of us.

Big Idea: Today we see that Jesus is our Apostle and High Priest, even greater than Moses, and that he invites us into his perfect rest. Now what does this even have to do with Christmas? Let’s find out together.

Step one. **Jesus is our Apostle and High Priest.** Look at verse 1. Right out the gate we get this incredible statement: “consider Jesus, that Apostle and High Priest of our confession.” This is such a loaded statement and reveals so much about Jesus and his role. Fun fact for you, this is the only time in all of scripture that Jesus is called an apostle. What is an apostle? Paul as an apostle, the twelve disciples were apostles, but what does that mean? **An apostle is a delegate or messenger. One who was sent as a representative. An Apostle in the New Testament**

context was one who was sent out into the world to represent Christ and to proclaim the gospel, the good news. Often accompanied by a supernatural work of the Spirit with signs and wonders.

But now in this context, Jesus is the apostle. Who better to be sent by God, to represent God than, God himself in the flesh? Who better to bring the good news of the Kingdom of heaven, than the one who came from heaven? Jesus is God's perfect representative and delegate sent to humanity.

Secondly, Jesus is our High Priest. We talked about this a little but last week. The High Priest was the representative of the people to God. Once a year on the day of atonement the High Priest would enter the holy of holies and burn incense and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat and make atonement for the sins of the people. He represented the people before God. This is why Jesus had to be fully man, to be born of a woman, born on Christmas, so that he could truly represent humanity as our High Priest. In solidarity with humankind. Is this making sense? Can you see why this is such an important Christological statement? **Jesus perfectly represents God to humanity and perfectly represents humans before God.** No one else could have both of those roles and do them the way Jesus did.

2. Step two, **Jesus is greater than Moses.** Now, the author shifts gears and explains how Jesus our Apostle and High Priest is greater than Moses. Look at verse 2-6. "Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses." Now I know that everyone here is looking at me thinking, did this guy really go to seminary? Duh, Jesus is greater than Moses. To us it's a no brainer. But remember, this letter was written to 1st century Jewish Christians and the author is going to systematically demonstrate that Jesus was superior to everything Judaism believed and held dear, and let me tell you, to the Jews, Moses was the GOAT!

He was the greatest of all time. In Judaism, there are many great biblical figures. Abraham, Moses, King David, Elijah, these were the biggest heroes of the Bible. But none of them, none compared to Moses. Sure, Abraham was the patriarch, the father of the nation. Sure, Abraham gave them the covenant of circumcision but no one really wants to talk about that. But Moses, he gave them everything else.

Let's consider Moses' accomplishments for a moment.

1. He gave up his life of luxury in the palace when he defended a Hebrew who was being beaten.
2. Led Israel out of slavery in Egypt.
3. Performed many miracles including the parting of the Red Sea, water from the rock, etc. . .
4. Met with God on Mt. Sinai (his face glowed like the sun when he came down).
5. Led Israel in battle (when he raised his arms, Israel won).
6. Gave Israel the Law. (The tablets of stone are the first things we think of).
7. Gave Israel the Torah, this might be the most significant thing Moses did.

The first five books of the Old Testament are the Torah, the books of the law. These are the most honored, most sacred books of the Hebrew Bible. Through the torah, Moses gave Israel its cultural and religious identity. Through the Torah, they could learn how to live in relationships with God, how to live well, how to be clean and holy and forgiven. How to worship God, how to celebrate festivals and feasts. Everything that made an Israelite an Israelite, was found in the Torah, and that came from Moses.

8. Moses led Israel to the promised land so they could enter God's rest.
9. In his own way, Moses was the apostle and high priest. He was sent as God's representative to proclaim the good news of God's deliverance, and He represented the people of Israel before God.

No one in Israel's history was more significant than Moses. And because of this the Jews put him up on this huge pedestal above everyone else and he became the highest standard. Almost mythical status.

So when the author of the letter claims that Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses. These are fighting words. This is a huge statement. Just as the builder of the house is worthy of more glory than the house itself, though Moses was a faithful servant in God's house, Jesus is a faithful son. Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses.

Illustration: Do any of you like Christmas carols? What are some of your favorite carols? Go ahead, what are your favorites? I wish I could hear what our friends in (Classic 9:30 or Online) said. Email me your favorite carol this week so I can listen to them.

My favorite Christmas carol, we sang it this morning. O come, O come Emanuel. It is one of, if not the oldest Christmas carol that we sing today. I nerded out a little bit this week. I was a history major. This song was written in the 900's by monks. Originally in Latin. It was part of a series of chants called the great *antiphons*. Each chant contained a different name of Christ and was sung on the seven evenings leading up to Christmas. We don't often sing the fifth verse, but it goes like this. "O come o come thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes on Sinai's height, in ancient times once gave the law. In cloud and majesty and awe. Rejoice, rejoice Emanuel, shall come to thee O Israel."

This carol, and the monk that wrote it, understood that Jesus was there, fully God, one with the Father, present in giving of the Law to Moses.

Jesus was there giving Moses the tablets of stone, inspiring Moses as he assembled wrote the Torah. Who is greater, the one who receives the law or the one who gives the law? Jesus is greater than Moses and worthy of greater glory than Moses.

3. Step Three: **Jesus invites us to rest in him.** Verses 7-11.

This section is a quote from psalm 95. Not the whole psalm, just the warning. What is he talking about? He is setting up the invitation to enter into the rest that is offered by Jesus to those who put their trust in him. Jesus offers us a greater rest than what Moses offered to Israel.

Moses offered Israel a place of rest that never truly satisfied, at least, Israel was never satisfied with it. Moses offered a land set aside for the people of God, a land flowing with milk and honey. A land where they could be free from threats, free from slavery, free from violence, free from evil influence. Where Israel could live as a holy people before a holy God. All they had to do was follow after God with their whole hearts and obey his commandments. It never worked out that well for them. As a nation, they just didn't seem to love God. They wanted the blessings that God promised but they didn't want the boundaries that God set for them.

Jesus offers us a rest that truly satisfies our hearts. Jesus offers a rest that is better than anything our world or culture can give us. When we place our trust in Jesus and love him with all our hearts, we find rest for our soul.

We no longer have to:

- Try to earn God's favor. --- Jesus earned that for us.
- Try to be good enough for God. --- Jesus makes us good enough.
- Hide our shame or our mistakes. --- We are forgiven by the blood of Jesus.
- Worry about what the world thinks about us. --- God loves us unconditionally.
- Try to gain attention or recognition. --- God sees us and knows us.

- Worry about where we will go when we die. --- Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us and one day we will go to him.

This is not a promise to take away hard things or hard work or struggles. This is the assurance that God alone can fill the longing in our souls, and when things are hard the Lord will be with us and strengthen us and comfort us. Jesus offers us a rest that is better than anything Moses offered and better than anything that the world can give.

I referred to this verse a few weeks ago, it's still one of my favorites.

Matthew 11:27-30. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Jesus calls us to rest in him.

As we are heading into the busiest couple of weeks before Christmas, what kind of rest is Jesus calling you to? Is it rest from trying to meet everyone else's expectations? Rest from performing all the time? Rest from an over busy, frenzy filled speed of life? Rest from self-criticism and doubt? Rest from the stresses and anxiety of your job? Rest from entertainment and over stimulation? Maybe you need just one day of actual physical rest, a true sabbath to hit the reset button. What kind of rest is Jesus calling you to right now?

To be honest, resting is hard for me. Ask my wife. Being still with God, being still and resting with my family is hard. I don't necessarily live a crazy busy life, but when I'm home and have a bit of free time or even carve out time to rest, I would usually rather go outside or do a project or build something. And I tell myself that it is restorative because I have a

desk job and I like to build things and make things, but the reality is, I'm not good at just resting and spending time with Jesus and asking him to restore my soul. Psalm 23 starts off with rest. You all know this one. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul. Jesus is our good shepherd, and if we follow him, he will lead us into his rest. This is definitely a growth area for me.

Warning: Do not harden your hearts. The author ends the chapter with a warning. Look at verses 12-15.

Remember back in Exodus, Moses led the people to the promised land but they rebelled and they did not enter into God's rest. They sent in spies to scout out the land, and they came back terrified of the giants men they saw. And the people rebelled and refused to believe that God would give them the land as he promised. Their hearts were hard. So Moses led them into the wilderness and the whole generation died.

Today, do not harden your hearts. Check your heart and ask if you have allowed sin to sneak in, if you have allowed bitterness to take root, if anger is stealing your joy. Or maybe something other than God is drawing your affections away from him. The promises of the world are always calling to us and pulling us away from our true love.

This morning let's all do a heart check. Are we soft and tender to the Holy Spirit? Are we tender to the Lord? Are we tender towards our spouse? Our kids? How about our co-workers? Are we still tender towards the people who annoy us or bother us?

One of the best ways to keep our hearts tender towards the Lord is through mutual encouragement.

The Author tells us we are to exhort one another daily as long as it is called today. I love this statement. We don't use the word Exhort enough anymore. It means to encourage, to admonish or urge someone in a

particular direction. It's root meaning in the Greek is to call one alongside. Literally, hey, come along over here with me and walk with me. We are to come alongside one another daily and encourage each other so that we don't harden our hearts and we aren't turned away by sin.

Let's review really quick.

Jesus is our Apostle and High Priest. He is the perfect representative of God because he is fully God. And he is the perfect High Priest, fully human yet without sin, and able to perfectly represent humankind before God.

Jesus is greater than Moses. Even with all that Moses gave to the Israelites, all that he did for them, he was still just a Man, who did his best to follow the Lord. Jesus on the other hand, the Son of God. The head of God's house, and we are his house.

Jesus offers a more perfect rest. He invites us to find rest in him. Rest for our souls, for our hearts, for our minds. Satisfaction in him that we could never find anywhere else.

Finally, we are warned, not to harden our hearts towards God and turn away.

I like to leave you with a few questions.

1. Who have you put on a pedestal the way Moses was placed on a pedestal? We do this, its part of our human nature. We elevate people that we admire into a place that they maybe shouldn't be. Athletes, leaders, entertainers, who have you elevated and do they belong there?

2. How is Jesus calling you to rest this crazy busy season. Are you listening? Are you ignoring his call to rest?
3. This week do a heart check. Do you have any sin, any bitterness, any temptation, any anger that you have allowed to take root? Is it time to surrender that to the Lord and ask him to help you find freedom?
4. Who can you encourage this week? We all need encouragement sometimes. Who can you invite to come alongside?

Jesus is our Apostle and High Priest, He is greater than Moses, and he offers us true rest for our souls.