

# JESUS IS BETTER: letter to the Houstonians

Sermon Study Guide | Part Three: Better than Priests | 9/24/17 | @thestoryhouston @pastorerichuffman

## PURPOSE OF THIS SERMON SERIES

1. To become more familiar with the Bible through a study of Hebrews
2. To convey the stark differences between the Gospel of Jesus and religions of men
3. To inspire people to believe Jesus (as opposed to just “believing *in* Jesus”)

## THE REST OF THE STORY

We at The Story, like all Houstonians, have been working very hard since Harvey did his thing in our town. After losing several days of work and/or school, many of us are also playing a constant game of catch-up. Serious question: are you getting any rest? What’s your favorite way to rest?

### KEY TEXT: HEBREWS 4:1-3

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

## WHY ART THOU MAD BRO?

How is it possible to *fall short of God’s rest*?

Why do you think God gets *angry* when we fall short of His rest? What does our perpetual *work ethic* communicate to God?

### KEY TEXT: HEBREWS 4:9-13

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience. For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

## NOWHERE TO HIDE

What were the “works” that kept the author’s audience so busy? How are they different from all the stuff that keeps people today so busy? How are they the same?

What does it mean that God doesn’t just judge our actions and words but our *thoughts* and *attitudes* about our works?

## KEY TEXT: HEBREWS 4:14-16

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

## A MILE IN OUR SHOES

The author compares the Hebrew priests with Jesus by saying Jesus is “able to empathize with our weaknesses.” Why do you think the religious priests couldn’t empathize with the weaknesses of average men and women?

How, specifically, do you think the author means Jesus can empathize with the struggles, suffering, and weakness of average people?

What’s the difference between the ways religious people approach God through priests, rituals, and institutions, and the way believers in Jesus approach God through Christ?

## GOING DEEPER

For people who follow Jesus, “rest” isn’t just the absence of work; it’s all about trust. As with any relationship, the key to building trust in your relationship with God is PRAYER. So for Christians, there is a deep connection between REST and PRAYER.

How would you describe your prayer life these days?

How/when/where do you pray?

## What did Jesus have to say about prayer? (Matthew 6:6-7, John 15:7, Mark 11:24)

Check out this poem by Wendell Berry:

*When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.”*

What would change if you understood prayer as a pathway to rest instead of *just one more thing to do*?