

# First Sunday after Christmas – Epistle

**Bringing All The Kids Home!**

**Hebrews 2:10-18**

**First Sunday after Christmas**

**Analysis by Michael Hoy**

10It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, 12saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.” 13And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Here am I and the children whom God has given me.” 14Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. 16For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. 17Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. 18Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

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## **DIAGNOSIS: Home-sick**

### **Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Suffering***

Job once lamented, “human beings are born to trouble just as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). It harkens back to the words spoken by the Creator to the fallen Adam, “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). The “sufferings” themselves characterize the species and bear witness to just how far removed we are from Eden. Whatever might have been the good plan for the creation has been despoiled, and suffering now becomes a sign of being “born to trouble.” As one commentator put it, “Every human experience of success and flattery as well as every encounter with spite and suffering can assault a person’s trust in God and obedience toward God” (Robert H. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Hebrews*, [Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1984], 53).

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Enslaved***

The trouble is worse, however, by virtue of the fact of to whom human beings have become enslaved in their sufferings: that is, to the fear of death and the devil (v. 14). Far from trusting God to come to their aid, they are panic stricken (anxiety-laden) by the forces that surround them (v. 15), and are further distanced from home.

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *The Shame of God***

Not that they could come home if they wanted to. For their unholiness is so displeasing to the Father, they bear the mark of shame. The porch light has been turned off, the front door is locked, and God is not taking in those who have gone astray. There is no entitlement in the Law, not even for the descendants of Abraham.

## PROGNOSIS: Coming Home

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** – *Making At-one-ment*

But because Jesus bears the family imprimatur and blessing, we too get to be part of the family, and celebrate that we “all have one Father” (v. 11). For God the Father does send a “pioneer ” for an altogether new beginning for the strays, sending his own Son, Jesus the Christ to share their “flesh and blood” (v. 14), sharing also their testing, suffering, and death. More than that, he exchanges it, as “the faithful and merciful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people” (v. 17). In exchange for his sacrifice of himself (even unto death), we get to be made “perfect through [his] sufferings” (v. 10). Now there is a way home, through this pioneering Brother.

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution)** – *Sanctified*

Jesus comes to proclaim God’s name in our midst, trusting in God, and inviting us to do the same, because we are called back into the family. In fact, Jesus shares so much in solidarity with us as to bragging us up big time to the Father: “Here and I and the children you have given to me” (v. 13), showing up at the Father’s doorstep with such beleaguered beings as ourselves, yet beings embraced as brothers and sisters in Christ. For Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters, and so we are glad to be associated with him.

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution)** – *Glorying*

His sacrifice, in fact, makes us acceptable, holy, and pleasing to God the Father. “Welcome home!” It was fitting that such glory should come to pass. But passing on the glory is also part of the family secret—a secret that is to be made public in proclamation, as public as Jesus’ own proclamation and suffering and death and return to the Father. And we, who are kin through

Jesus, get to share the secret with all who themselves tested, suffering, shamed, enslaved, dying: "It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory...." Pioneering is something that Jesus does well, and we get to model not only his style, but his Message.