

THE PERFECT MAN HEBREWS 2:5-11

Perfect partners – is a website run by The Scotsman. It is a dating website and you look for your perfect partner; you tell a little about yourself and you can specify the kind of person you're looking to meet. So the idea is that you find the perfect partner that will suit you. You can even see the person that you might meet, because there are little photos on the website. Mind you, this is nothing new: I once met a crofter in Caithness who married an Italian girl that he had never met and she had never met him and he sent her his photo and she came to Caithness to marry him; I think she soon realised that he wasn't perfect! Some people would say he doesn't exist! The perfect man! But that might be a woman's perspective. You think you find the perfect man (or woman!) and love has persuaded you, then you discover that your perfect partner has just as many faults as you do.

"The word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood." (John 1:14) Last week, we said that Advent is about God coming to our neighbourhood, to our world. That is the glory of the Christmas story, with a serious Wow! factor about it. In Jesus, God has come to our world; the living God, the creator of the universe has come into our world in the shape and form of a child and His coming was trumpeted by angels, seen by shepherds, welcomed by wise men. That has always been one half of Christians' understanding of Jesus, that He is God's Son, the Son of the Most High God come into the world. But there is another half to that picture and the other half is that Jesus is and was a real human being; He came into our world and lived a real life; He didn't pretend to become a child, a boy, then a man; He didn't just seem to be human; He really did become a real human being, with real flesh and blood, just like us and moved into our neighbourhood.

Hebrews makes great play of the fact that Jesus shared our human nature: *"in bringing..."* (2:10f) *"Since the..."* (2:14a) He shares our humanity, our human nature, He is One of us. We'll see in a moment how that worked out. There is only one way in which that is not true – *"we have..."* (4:15) He faced all same human experiences that we face and we'll fill that out in a moment, but in only one way was He different – He was the perfect man! He made no mistakes; He never rebelled against God; He had no faults and failings; His faith was perfect and complete, He had no sin. Jesus was perfect man. He had to be a real man – that qualified Him to be our Saviour; He had to be the perfect man, who had no sin of His own to worry about – that also qualified Him to be our Saviour.

Jesus experienced human life here at first-hand. Work: many of us have spent many years giving time and energy to what we call 'work', our job, our place of employment. It is a place which gives us great satisfaction, when we see a job well done, but it is also a place which causes stress and frustration because of the people we work with, or just by fact of being tired out by Friday. The Bible doesn't tell us very much about Jesus' life before He was 30 when He began His ministry, but there are clues: Jesus was called the carpenter from Nazareth, as was Joseph before Him. Holman Hunt's picture *The Shadow of the Cross* is a work of imagination rather than based on anything hard and fast, but he used the clues we are given. It would seem that Jesus inherited the family business from Joseph, that He learned his father's trade and carried that business on until He left to begin His gospel ministry. He knew what it would be like to be tired, to hit His hand with a hammer, to be dirty, hot, and sweaty.

Family: we love our families; we pour an enormous amount of time and energy into our families; families are places of great joy and delight for us, no matter what we

mean by word 'family'. But families are also places of stress and tension. Why is that of the most stressful experiences in life, two of them focus on family life: divorce and Christmas Day! Research suggests that of the top most stressful experiences in life divorce and Christmas are near the top. We know that as well as joy, families can cause us grief and sadness and sleepless nights because the people we care for get into scrapes. Jesus knew what family life was all about: with His, He parents had to run away to Egypt, so they were refugees in His early years; there must have been some fall-out after He had gone missing on His way home from Jerusalem, the only story in the Bible about His growing up; He had brothers and sisters with whom He would have played when he was young, but who in the days of His ministry thought Him mad, deluded and who laughed at Him. We know nothing of Joseph after the Christmas story, but there is a tradition that he died when Jesus was a young man, so He would have known grief as close to home as it gets.

Experience of life: we all know that life is a mixture of good things and great days on the one hand and tough times and hard days on the other. We all wish that life was good all of the time because we think it would be so much easier to cope with; perhaps that's true, but life is just not like that. Some people seem to sail through life untouched by hard things, but these are few and far between and ultimately have to face dying and death at some point. Jesus was no different: we've already mentioned His experience of grief when Joseph died; He was tempted to do wrong things in the desert; His ministry was no cake-walk because while there were good things, there were also hard things when His friends argued amongst themselves, His family thought Him mad, He was arrested for no good reason, other than as a political pawn, He was the victim of a miscarriage of justice, He was beaten by Roman soldiers, then crucified as a common criminal. Hebrews again: "in bringing..." (2:10) Suffering and death completed His experience of life. He was made perfect? Was He not perfect already? The bud of the flower is perfect, it may have no blemishes; but then the flower is also perfect, complete in new way. Jesus was perfect all the way through His life, but His suffering and death made Him the complete man, the complete Saviour.

He is perfect to be our Saviour: all of this qualifies Jesus to be our Saviour. He has come into our world and has lived our life perfectly. He knows what life is like for us, how hard it can be, how good it is; He knows the temptations we face; He knows what suffering is like - all so that He can represent us before God. He stands before God, the perfect man, our representative in heaven and prays for us and as He does all of that God pours out grace, love and peace on us. He has perfectly obeyed God, the only man ever to do so and that led to His suffering and death; being the perfect man qualified Him to be the sin-bearer, to take our sin, our faults, mistakes and shortcomings, even our rebellion on Himself; the perfect man should never have died, but He chose to die bearing our sin so that He is our Saviour for ever.

He is perfect to be a pioneer: Pioneers are those who get there first; the wild west was full of pioneers in their wagon trains crossing the vast expanses of America to settle in new places; others followed them but only after the pioneers had blazed the trail. John Logie Baird can be described as a pioneer of Television because he went there first and others followed; there are all sorts of examples of pioneers. Jesus is described as the pioneer of our salvation; the NIV uses the word 'author' but that is perhaps not the best word; the original means 'someone who is the source and initiator of something, but also one who takes action first and brings others along after.' In that sense, pioneer is perhaps better. "*In bringing...*" (2:10) Jesus has gone first and we follow. Jesus has returned to heaven and is crowned with glory and honour; we will follow. Our hope is that we will share the glory and honour of heaven, that we will share Jesus' glory; one day we will be in the presence of God for ever

and live with Him. That is our hope because Jesus has gone first, the perfect man opening up the way for others to follow. We have the hope of heaven because the perfect man has gone there first. He is a pioneer for us.

He is perfect to be an example: so what does perfect man look like? What qualities would he have? Isaiah 11 describes the qualities of the Messiah: "*The Spirit...*" (11:2-4a) He is a list of qualities to which we should all aspire. The ability to see to the heart of an issue; the ability to devise a right course of action; the power to see it through to the end; the ability to treat needy people with compassion and to treat everyone in same way, with justice and fairness; the ability to know what God wants and to be the kind of person God wants him to be and do the things God wants Him to do – these are the qualities of the perfect man. Jesus was a man like this; Jesus embodied these qualities perfectly; we see these qualities in the picture which the gospels paint of Him. The challenge of perfect man is that we learn to be like Him, that we not only aspire to these qualities, but that we work hard to be like this for ourselves. The perfect man is our example of life and the way to live; we should be like this! Society has lost its way in some respects, yet it still recognises the quality of life we see in good people; they become role models for others; Jesus is a role model for us and for others.

The perfect man does exist – His name is Jesus. He is a real man, who lived a real life; He went to work; He was part of a family; He had the same experiences of life as we do. Only in one way was He different – He had no sin. He perfectly trusted God, He obeyed God perfectly, He was made complete by His suffering and death. Because He was perfect man:

He is our Saviour for ever – so Advent is a time to renew faith, to make that faith commitment;

He is the pioneer who goes before us and leads us in the hope of heaven – are we inspired to hope like this? It is not beyond us, because Jesus has opened up the way.

He is the perfect example of humanity – we can be like this, He is the One to copy, to emulate, to have the qualities in our lives that Jesus had in His.

The perfect man does exist – His name is Jesus.