

## THE MESSAGE

Jan 10, 2010

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

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*Our Lord, The Boss*

Have you ever had a bad boss?

I read a story about a woman in Kansas. Her boss asked her to plan an employee outing, which she did. She scheduled a trip to attend a major league baseball game. She set the date a couple of months ahead, got a reduced price on tickets, organized the carpooling, set up everything. She did it all.

Unfortunately, on the day of the game it rained and the game was canceled. Her boss told her that she had picked that date because she knew it was going to rain. Can you believe it? Her boss changed her title from manager to assistant manager, and reduced her pay.

A few months later that same boss asked her to plan an employee picnic. She said, "No way!" Her boss then informed the Board of Directors that she was being insubordinate. Amazing! ([www.workingamerica.org](http://www.workingamerica.org).)

There was an article in a business magazine entitled "Six Signs You Have a Bad Boss." Here they are:

1. Your boss makes you do what he or she is unwilling to do.
2. Your boss takes credit for your work without giving you any recognition.
3. Your boss insists on standards that he or she doesn't bother to live up to.
4. Your boss asks you to cover up for his or her mistakes.
5. Your boss hangs you out to dry instead of supporting you when you make a mistake.
6. Your boss does not help you to develop or set you up for success.

[http://www.lifescrypt.com/Life/Money/Work/6\\_Signs\\_You\\_Have\\_A\\_Bad\\_Boss.aspx?p=1](http://www.lifescrypt.com/Life/Money/Work/6_Signs_You_Have_A_Bad_Boss.aspx?p=1)

Over the next few weeks we will be looking at some of the many facets of who Jesus is. Today we consider what it means to call him, Lord. Jesus is Lord. Say that with me. *Jesus is Lord*. This was the very first creed – simple yet profound.

Have you noticed that some people tend to call Jesus "Lord" as if it were his nickname? When we call Jesus, "Lord," it says something profound about him and about us.

In the Old Testament world, the word “lord” was a way of being polite like today calling someone “sir” or “mamm.” In the New Testament world calling Jesus “Lord,” was like calling him the boss, big difference.

Now... we all know there are good bosses and there are not-so-good bosses. What kind of boss is Jesus? What kind of Lord is he? Our reading from Hebrews today offers us an answer. (*Read the text*) The writer of Hebrews refers to Jesus as our Great High Priest.

In the Old Testament, priests did two things they taught about God’s law (what God expected from them) and they offered sacrifices to God. Priests were the intermediaries between a sinful people and a holy God.

The high priest had a very special role. Each year, on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), he would enter into the Holy of Holies (a special part of the temple), where the Ark of the Covenant was kept and where God’s presence was believed to dwell on earth. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would offer sacrifices to atone for his sins and the sins of the people. These sacrifices had to be made each year to maintain a right relationship between God and God’s people. It was a yearly thing.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is our Great High Priest, the High Priest of a new covenant, and he is unlike any other high priest. Human high priests offered sacrifices yearly. Jesus gave his life as a final sacrifice for sin, removing all our sins once and forever. Human high priests entered the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, once a year to make atonement. Jesus ascended to the highest sanctuary of all, heaven itself, and dwells there with God forever. Human high priests interceded between God and the people, yet they were sinful too. Jesus was without sin and he has the power to do something about our sin. Human high priests were the highest religious authority among the people, Jesus, as the Son of God, has greater authority than any human priest.

Until Jesus came along people could not approach God except through the priest. When Jesus died the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies was torn in two, opening a way for all peoples to approach God through Jesus.

Here’s the thing, the ancient Israelites believed that their relationship with God depended on the priest’s work of atoning for their sins. Millions of animals were slaughtered to pay the price for the people’s sins over the years, and yet the people remained sinful and hopelessly separated from God.

Jesus comes along and becomes the perfect high priest *and* the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people of all times. Jesus makes our atonement possible and complete. This is why he is worthy to be called Lord of our lives, the boss of our lives...

Let’s look again at that list of six signs of a bad boss and how Jesus stacks up.

1. *A bad boss makes you do what he or she is unwilling to do.* Jesus does for us what we are unable to do for ourselves. He paid the price for our sins on the cross.
2. *A bad boss takes credit for your work without giving you any recognition.* Jesus calls us friend and family -- coworkers with him in the ministry of reconciliation.
3. *A bad boss insists on standards that he or she doesn't bother to live up to.* Jesus exceeds every standard and by grace helps us to live by those standards too.
4. *A bad boss asks you to cover up for his or her mistakes.* Jesus never makes a mistake. He doesn't need us to cover for him.
5. *A bad boss hangs you out to dry instead of supporting you when you make a mistake.* Jesus never hangs us out to dry instead he hung on the cross to cover our mistakes.
6. *A bad boss does not help you to develop or set you up for success.* Jesus sends the Holy Spirit so that by grace we might develop into his very likeness every day. Our "success" is faithfulness to him and his way of love.

That's our boss. That's our Lord. That's Jesus. That's why he is worthy of our praise and our worship and our very lives.

Now... let's talk turkey. Since we have such an awesome boss, an incredible Lord, a great High Priest, how should we live and serve him?

I have a few suggestions. Now this is just a hunch folks. I believe that many churches experiencing conflict do so because there is some confusion about who the boss is. Consider these three things:

**First:** Some church people (I know this is hard to believe but) some church people believe that (for whatever reason) they are the boss in the church. They love telling others (especially telling the pastor) what to do, or they think they know what the pastor or others should be doing. This bossiness is a huge sin in many struggling churches right now.

Here's what I've discovered. The devil loves it when we think that we are the boss. So folks say this with me. "*I am not the boss around here.*" Did anyone not say that? Now, say this with me, "*I never, ever will be the boss around here.*" Did anyone not say that this time? In some churches there are people who need to stop bossing others around.

**Second.** Some people see the church as a business. If that is the case then the pastor becomes the boss, naturally. News flash – the church is not a business, never was and never will be. A business exists to make money. Churches exist to make disciples -- not money. Here's the amazing thing that I've discovered, churches that are filled with growing disciples don't have a money problem.

Here's how I see it folks. The church is *in* business but is not *a* business so I'm not the boss. As tempting as it is for me to want to be the boss or for you to want me to be the boss, I'm not the boss.

I'm a servant of the Lord called by God to lead more and more people to commit their lives to Jesus and live accordingly. I am not here to preserve this church or recreate the glory days of the past. For the handful of people here (and there is only a handful) who are having trouble with that then take it up with Jesus. He's the boss.

**Third.** Since Jesus is the boss then we are called to live our lives in devotion and obedience to him. Now here's the kicker... before obedience and devotion to Jesus can happen, repentance must take place. Think about this for a moment with me. We Lutherans like to talk about repentance but that's about as far as it goes, or we wouldn't be in the mess we're in right now as a church and as a denomination and perhaps even in our own lives.

You see... I read somewhere that Jesus said he did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repent and believe in the good news (Matt. 9:13). For us repentance and faith go hand-in-hand. They occur simultaneously in a sinner's heart. We cannot have one without the other.

The boss, Jesus, is calling us sinners to repent and believe -- to change -- yes to change our hearts, our minds, and our actions. I had planned to say a lot more about this but I will save that for another time...

This past Thursday I was driving through Lebanon on my way to the Hershey Hospital to make a hospital call. I pulled up beside a tracker and trailer and I noticed on the door was the name of the food company and the phrase, Colossians 3:17. When I got home I grabbed my Bible and looked up Colossians 3:17. It reminded me who the boss is and why I do what I do. I strongly encourage you, when you get home, grab your Bible and reflect on that passage, Colossians 3:17.

That passage confirmed what I already know to be true. Jesus is the boss in heaven and on earth. And that puts everything in a different perspective for me. We don't often get to choose our boss, but it's great to know that our boss, our Lord, Jesus has chosen us, forgives us, and continues to calls us to be about his work in the world. Jesus has made all the difference in my life. What difference is he making in yours?

Let us pray... Lord this sermon was hard to preach and ever harder to hear. And yet it is so true, Jesus you are the boss. May we never forget that and live accordingly in the church and in the world! Amen.