

+WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



A high priest who sympathises with our weakness

The older my son gets (he's 19 months) the more he gets acquainted with the feeling of frustration! He is developing opinions about the world, about how he wants to spend his time, which books he wants to read, and what he wants to have for dinner. And on a semi-regular basis he finds out that he can't have what he wants: Yes, you do have to wear clothes to nursery; No, you can't have only snacks for dinner; Yes, it is time for bed. Of course, all of this is extremely frustrating for him, and it leads to the usual behaviours of the "terrible two's".

I feel such sympathy for my lad (even as I'm the primary source of his frustration), I remember what it was like to be young, and the frustration I felt towards my parents who wouldn't allow me to eat a third helping of ice-cream. My own experiences give me empathy for his experience, so I'm gracious with him when his frustration leads him to act out in ways that aren't the best.

This example illustrates an idea from the scripture set for this Sunday. In Hebrews 4 verse 15 we read, "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." Jesus our high priest has experienced the pains, frustrations, sicknesses, and temptations of everyday human life. He knows what you are going through because he also lived an ordinary human life like you.

But crucially, although Jesus experienced normal life, like we do, he did not succumb to the temptation of sin, like we do.

This empathy that Jesus has for us makes him a wonderful high priest, he prays for us understanding intimately what we are going through, and because of his sinlessness we are free to approach God's throne with confidence. The writer of Hebrews again, "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."

It is my hope that each of us, as we enter into worship, experience the mercy and grace that we need as we approach God's throne through our great high priest, Jesus Christ, who can sympathise with us in our weakness.

Rev James Lawrence, Canon Missioner at Blackburn Cathedral