

## “Dressing Up Like Jesus”

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**New Testament Lesson:** Hebrews 1:1-5

**Old Testament Lesson:** Psalm 8

Donald Trump, Katy Perry, a slice of “rat pizza” and a mouse, deflated footballs – these are just some of the most popular Halloween costumes you can expect to see this Saturday. If you don’t know what “rat pizza” is, check YouTube. Or better yet, don’t; you’re not missing much.

The origins of Halloween can be traced back to the Celtic festival (sah-win) Samhain, when the souls of the dead were thought to revisit their homes. As people converted to Christianity in the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church used modified versions of such festivals to attract people to the faith, and that’s how Halloween became popular.

What I find interesting, though, is that Jesus and God had them all beat on this from the beginning. As Hebrews tells us, Jesus “is the reflection of God’s glory, the exact imprint of God’s very being...” It’s as if Jesus was the first Halloween character – can I get struck by lightning for that?!? Jesus is the exact image of God. It’s right there in scripture.

And yet, we have no way of actually understanding the relationship between Jesus and God. It’s beyond our comprehension. Jesus is God, and this goes way beyond some Halloween costume where little Johnny or Jenny dresses up like an Avenger!

When I said Jesus and God had them all beat from the beginning, I was underestimating it a bit. According to Hebrews, Jesus and God had them all beat before the beginning. After all, scripture tells us that it was through Jesus that God “created the worlds.” Have you ever wondered about that? How is it that “through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3)?

But why should we care about Jesus on this level? Now that everything that has been made, what’s so important about knowing Jesus on the level of creation? It’s important to know Jesus’ role in the beginning in order to receive his blessings today.

Check this out. “Long ago,” says Hebrews, “God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.”

Here we see that Jesus is before time and space – before creation of the worlds. Jesus is heir of all things – nothing of the Father’s is withheld from the Son. And Jesus sustains all things – everything that we have today is at risk without Jesus. Jesus is before time and space. Why is that important?

It’s important because if there was a time when Jesus did not exist – if Jesus came into being – then he can go out of being. In other words, the only way we can be certain that Jesus is here with us today, tomorrow and come-what-may is the fact that Jesus was and is and ever shall be.

That’s our Gloria Patri or Glory to God that we sing every Sunday, isn’t it? Let’s sing that together now, the regular version:

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Keep that in mind each week when we sing Glory to God – if Jesus was not present prior to creation, how can we be confident he is present with us today, tomorrow, and in the world to come?

OK, enough theology! Just kidding; it’s all theology. But let’s move on to matters a little less esoteric. What does it mean that Jesus is heir of all things – that nothing of God’s is withheld from Jesus?

What this means is that God gives his full self to us in Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ day, unlike today for the most part, when you spoke to a man’s son you could be certain it was just like speaking to the man himself.

And so it is with God. In Jesus Christ, we get the full being of God, as fully expressed as we are able to comprehend or imagine. God does not hold back from us.

Jesus Christ is “true God from true God ... of one being with the Father,” just like in the Nicene Creed that we affirm out loud on Communion Sundays. David Needham in his book “Close to His Majesty” tells about a missionary who has to go leave his family for a long journey. Aware that his youngest daughter would not understand, he placed in his coat pocket a bright red apple to give her as he boarded the train. Apples were rare where he was and served as special gifts. Finally the moment came. He embraced his wife and each of the older children, and then it was his little girl’s turn. Picking her up in his arms, he pressed the apple into her chubby hand, hoping that this special gift would soften the impact of his leaving. But instead, as he looked back from the slowly departing train, he saw the apple slip from her hand and roll across the platform. Tears streamed down her face as she ran alongside the train sobbing, “Daddy, I don’t want what you give – I want you!”<sup>1</sup>

Typically, we know Jesus by what he gives, his sayings, his miracles, and his actions; which are all one step (or gift) removed from God the Father. But here, we learn of Jesus by his relationship to God, to the world, and to creation, Jesus, of one being with the Father – no separation.

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<sup>1</sup> David C. Needham, *Close to His Majesty* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1987), 83-84.

How do people know you? Are you known by your relationship to worldly things such as the teams you root for – Go Royals! – the Facebook posts you make, the books you read, the job you do, the family members you have, the church where you worship and serve?

None of these ways of being known is bad, in and of itself. But the only way any of them are worth anything is if they are underpinned by your relationship with God.

We waste a lot of time and energy doing things that have nothing to do with our relationship to God. And yet, everything we do can be so much more powerful and meaningful if we take a moment to think about where God is in the midst of our day-to-day lives – particularly when we have to be separated from those we love, like a daddy separated from his little girl.

Jesus is heir of all things – nothing of God's is withheld from him. And so it is with us, as co-heirs with Jesus (Romans 8:17) – in Christ, God holds nothing back from us, there is no separation, except that which we foolishly force between God and our lives.

Finally, what does it mean that Jesus sustains all things? Everything that we have today is at risk without Jesus. According to Hebrews, when Jesus “had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” What this means is that after Jesus' crucifixion, death and resurrection, he took his place at the right hand of God the Father.

Jesus is above all things, holding all things together. And that's how Jesus holds us together. Who among us could make it through the day without faith that Jesus has things under control?

I mean, when things go wrong, it's easy to doubt. But in the end, who else can you really rely on? No one, but Jesus.

This world is not perfect – far from it! We are not perfect – not me, not you, not anyone – far from it. Only Christ is perfect. And because God came to us in Jesus Christ, we are made perfect through him. The world is perfected through Jesus Christ, on that you can rely. All along this journey we took today – from creation, to incarnation, to continuation, to purification – Jesus has been by our side every step of the way.

“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Left to our own devices, we perish – cease to exist. But thank God that we are so loved. Thank God that we have Jesus Christ to see us through.

Whatever it is that you are facing this week, know that you are not alone. Jesus is right there alongside you, able to handle anything and everything. We know this now: That all things came into being through him; that in Jesus, God holds nothing back from us; and that through Jesus, God perfects and sustains all things, including us.

Halloween is just around the corner. There will be a lot of dressing up this weekend. And it's Jesus who has the costume that can't be beat. Because Jesus is the true reflection of God, the exact image of God's very being.

So the question is, when people look upon you – upon me – what do they see? Do they see a reflection of Jesus – do they see us dressing up like Jesus – on the inside, shining outward? Amen.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Holy God, we know that you have created us, named us and claimed us as your own precious children. We trust in that love, and yet we wonder how there can be so much pain and suffering in the world.

In our hearts, we know that you grieve and weep with us, but we continue to seek answers to tragedies we cannot fathom. We need to feel your abiding presence and steadfast love.

We pray for the Vansandt/Roberts family, for Mary Smith and for all those who face the loss of a loved one.

We pray for Marvin's daughter, Colleen, and all those facing cancer – Emily and Mary and others we know.

We pray for Merry Oliphant's sister, Pat, that her organ transplant would be a huge success.

And we trust, Lord, that your hand is in the midst of it all, guiding the process toward new life in you. We can't know the reasons behind the struggles we face – only that this world is not perfect, only that you are, and that in you, all our burdens will be lifted, in the fullness of time.

So we trust our days to you, giving thanks for the miracle of new babies, for the promise of a new day, for the renewal of our faith, come what may.

For it is in your Son that you have shown us the power of your love, a power that overcomes all things.

We join now, O God, in praying the prayer that brings us closer to you, that provides for us all of our needs, that delivers us from all our struggles, as together we pray saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;  
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts as we  
forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil,  
For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever.**

**Amen.**