

A Greater Shepherd

Jesus is Greater #26 - Pastor Gary Combs - November 23, 2025 - Hebrews 13:18-25

INTRO: Good morning church! Today is a significant day. For 26 Sundays, over the past three years, we have been immersed in one of the most powerful and profound books in all of Scripture: The Book of Hebrews, in our series **JESUS IS GREATER**.

It has been a truly wonderful journey. As we stand at the final verses, I hope you feel, as I do, that our study has only just begun. My prayer is that we will carry the core truths of this book with us, and continue to study this magnificent letter for the rest of our lives.

There is truly no other book like Hebrews in the entire Bible. Think about what we've learned:

- It contains the most sophisticated Greek in the NT—highly rhetorical, polished, and structured like a sermon.
- It masterfully navigates deep OT categories—the priesthood, the tabernacle, the sacrifices, the covenants—all to demonstrate one towering, non-negotiable truth: **JESUS IS GREATER!**
- It offers a unique theological voice, introducing ideas like the priesthood of Melchizedek that show us just how vast and glorious Jesus' office is.

And this entire, grand, sweeping masterpiece has been distilled into one magnificent theme: **JESUS IS GREATER!**

Need: Yet we live in a world filled with anxiety, uncertainty, and spiritual drift. Many believers feel ill-equipped to live lives that truly please God. We often try to rely on our own strength, self-help strategies, or even religious routines rather than trusting the One who is greater than all our problems and needs. Some of us feel wounded, weary, or wandering. Like sheep, we easily go astray. What we need most is not more effort, but **A GREATER SHEPHERD!**

Trans: That's why today's message is so important. The author of Hebrews closes with a benediction that points us to Jesus, our Great Shepherd, who alone can equip us to live lives pleasing to God.

BODY: In the book of Hebrews 13:18-25, the author concluded his letter to the Jewish background believers by offering a benediction asking God to equip believers through Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, to live lives pleasing to God. We can be equipped by the Great Shepherd to live lives pleasing to God. How can we be equipped by the Great Shepherd to live lives pleasing to God? The text gives us **three essential provisions** from the Great Shepherd that equip us to live lives pleasing to God:

Read text: Hebrews 13:18-25 (ESV) ¹⁸ Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. ¹⁹ I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. ²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. ²² I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³ You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. ²⁴ Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. ²⁵ Grace be with all of you.

THROUGH OUR GREAT SHEPHERD JESUS...

1. We have His confident access to intercessory prayer.

EXP: (18-19) The 1st essential provision we have through our Great Shepherd Jesus is confident access to intercessory prayer, first from Jesus to the Father, but also to “pray” (18) for one another.

“**Pray for us**” (18) (προσεύχομαι, *proseuchomai*) (PAM) - to pray to God. Intercessory prayer.

“**We are sure that we**” (18) - Here the author switches to 1st person (“we...!”), moving from a somewhat formal theological book, only rarely using 1st person, to in the end, a very personal letter.

“**Clear conscience**” (18) (συνείδησις, *suneidēsis*) - Though he and Timothy and other apostles had been falsely imprisoned, he had a clear conscience, desiring their prayers to be “restored” to fellowship.

“**I urge you**” (19) (παρακαλέω, *parakaleō*) - to call to one's side, call for, summon; to admonish, exhort

“**More earnestly**” (19) (περισσότερως, *perissotēros*) - more abundantly; a greater degree; more earnestly,

“**Restored**” (19) (ἀποκαθίστημι, *apokathistēmi*) - to restore to its former state. Restored to their fellowship.

ARG: Christ is our greatest intercessor and our confident access to the Father.

Hebrews 7:25 (ESV) Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

A Greater Shepherd

Jesus is Greater #26 - Pastor Gary Combs - November 23, 2025 - Hebrews 13:18-25

Hebrews 10:19-22 (ESV) Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ...and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...

In the Spirit of Christ, we are “always” to pray for fellow believers.

Ephesians 6:18 (NIV) And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

ILL: One of the most beautiful and powerful ways to care for others I've seen is to put one in a chair in the center of a CG and have them lay hands and pray over them.

APP: Do you take full advantage of this provision? Stop thinking of prayer as a chore or a last resort. Because of Jesus, your prayer time is a confident meeting with the King who has already granted your petition based on the merits of your Great Shepherd. Commit today to praying consistently for your leaders and fellow saints, and above all, draw near to God yourself with confidence.

2. We have His eternal covenant that perfectly equips us.

EXP: (20-21) The 2nd essential provision we have through our Great Shepherd Jesus is we have an “eternal covenant” (20) that perfectly equips us to please God. Notice the phrase “working in us” (21), showing the ongoing process of God's work of sanctification in us. “Now may” (20) begins the benediction.

“**God of peace**” (20) (εἰρήνη, *eirēnē*) - security, safety, prosperity, peace, harmony, *shalom*. “God's disposition toward those who are in Christ is one of peace. Because of Jesus's work on our behalf, we now know God as the God of peace. We thank God that Christ has achieved that peace for us” (R. Albert Mohler, *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*).

“**Brought again from the dead**” (20) (ἀνάγω, *anagō*) - bring (again, forth, up again), Here, resurrection.

“**Great shepherd**” (20) (μέγας ποιμήν, *megas poimēn*) - a great shepherd; or pastor.

“**Blood**” (20) (αἷμα, *haima*) - appears 21 times in Hebrews, more than any other NT book. This is a key feature of the book, contrasting the temporary, repeated blood sacrifices of the Old Covenant with the eternal, once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ, whose blood provides complete and final redemption

“**Eternal covenant**” (20) (αἰώνιος, *aiōnios*) - everlasting, eternal. (διαθήκη, *diathēkē*) a compact, a covenant, a testament. Eternal not only in the future sense, but even before creation:

Revelation 13:8 (KJV) ... the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

“This is the “everlasting” covenant, the purpose for which God made the world: to demonstrate his glory in the salvation of sinners by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Mohler).

“**Equip you with everything good**” (21) (καταρτίζω, *katartizō*) - to complete; make perfect, perfectly equip.

“**His will**” (21) (θέλημα, *thelēma*) - what one has determined shall be done; commands, precepts, will

“**Working in us**” (21) (ποιέω, *poieō*) - to make ready, to prepare; to produce, bear, shoot forth

“**Pleasing in his sight**” (21) (εὐάρεστος, *euarestos*) - well pleasing, acceptable.

Hebrews 11:6 (NLT) And it is impossible to please God without faith.

“**Glory**” (21) (δόξα, *doxa*) - splendor, magnificence, excellence, preeminence, dignity, grace; majesty.

ARG: Christ has secured an eternal redemption for us by His own blood.

Hebrews 9:11-12 (ESV) ¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

A Greater Shepherd

Jesus is Greater #26 - Pastor Gary Combs - November 23, 2025 - Hebrews 13:18-25

Christ has perfected us and is sanctifying us by His single offering of His blood.

Hebrews 10:14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

ILL: When we're born, we have a body, but we have to learn to walk and talk. When we're born again, we have a perfect, complete spiritual life, but we have to learn to walk by faith according to His power.

APP: Have you been trying to live the Christian life in your own effort, as if the outcome depends on you? Instead, trust the finished work of Christ. Stop striving in your strength and start serving in His. Each day, when you wake up, pray: "Lord Jesus, equip me today to do Your will through Your covenant and not by my effort." Then step out in faith, knowing that what He calls you to, He perfectly equips you for.

3. We have His exhorting Word and gracious people.

EXP: (22-25) The 3rd essential provision we have through our Great Shepherd Jesus is we have His "word of exhortation" (22) and His grace-filled people, which is His church, to encourage us. The Shepherd knows we need guidance and support to persevere.

"I appeal to you" (22) (παρακαλέω, *parakaleō*) - same word for "urge" from verse 19.

"Bear with" (22) (ἀνέχω, *anechō*) (PAM) - to hold up; to sustain, to bear, to endure.

"Word of exhortation" (22) (παράκλησις, *paraklēsis*) - exhortation, admonition, encouragement,

"I have written to you briefly" (22) (βραχύς, *brachus*) - short, small, little. "This does not mean that this Epistle is short... but that it was brief compared with the importance and difficulty of the subjects of which he had treated." (*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*)

"Timothy has been released" (23) (ἀπολύω, *apolyō*) - to set free, let go, release. Probably from prison.

"With whom I shall see you" (23) (ὀπτάνομαι, *optanomai*) - to look, see. Paul wanted to see them again.

"Greet all" (24) (ἀσπάζομαι, *aspazomai*) (AMP) - to salute one, greet, bid welcome, wish well.

"Italy" (24) (Ἰταλία, *italia*) - It is surprising that the author uses Italy to describe the region. This only appears in 3 other places in Acts. This could indicate a similar pen: Luke's pen and Paul's voice.

"Grace be with all of you" (25) (χάρις, *charis*) - grace; that which affords joy, divine, unmerited favor.

ARG: The Great Shepherd sustains our faith through the Word and the fellowship of the saints.

Hebrews 3:13 (ESV) But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...

ILL: A shepherd's staff has both a crook and a point. One for bringing in closer and one for correction.

APP: Do you "bear with" exhortation, even when it hurts? Are you connected to community so that others can speak grace into your life? Commit today to be open to exhortation and actively engaged in fellowship. Don't go it alone. Lean into His truth and His people.

CONCLUSION: Today, as we conclude our journey in Hebrews, we find the core of living a God-pleasing life is found in the **Great Shepherd's three essential provisions:** (1) His confident access to intercessory prayer. (2) His eternal covenant that perfectly equips us. And (3) His final grace through His enduring fellowship.

The entire weight of this powerful letter rests on this truth: **Jesus is Greater!** He has provided everything we need to be made complete. Go forth and live a life pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever! Amen. Let's pray.