

Our Brother Can Help

✦ God's family (vv.10-13)

✦ In hard times (vv.14-18)

In the name of Jesus, God's own Son, **our Brother**, dearly redeemed children of God:

How long did it take for Christmas peace to be shattered? Probably only a few weeks before Mary and Joseph had to flee to Egypt to rescue Baby Jesus from King Herod's jealous rage. How long for your personal Christmas? Maybe fun with relatives lasted until a dream like mine the other night. My brothers and I get along so well. I can't remember our last disagreement. But that's why my dream was such a shock. I found my woodshop window wide open and a huge pile of sawdust on the floor. Imagine someone trashed your kitchen. You ask a few questions; they have an attitude. Lots of lumber must have been planed for that much sawdust. Then an accusation you want some of what's already hidden away?

You wake up and wonder, "Lord, am I angry deep down in my soul?" But that situation would upset most of us. Then it dawned on me. God sometimes lets us feel what He feels. I'm not the owner in my dream; I'm the brother with the bad attitude. So are you. The dear Holy Spirit today corrects, comforts and encourages us with this: **Our Brother Can Help**. Look what He did to make us part of...

✦ God's family (vv.10-13)

Before we get to the **family**, think of a typical scientist today debating with God: "I'll bet you my eternal soul I can make anything you can!" "You're on," God replies. So the scientist works twenty years, invests \$10 billion to reveal the origin of the universe. But just when he's ready to build his monument to modern technology, a voice thunders from heaven: "Wait a minute! Use your own dirt!"

All of us are born into God's world like brothers invited to use God's stuff. The air we breath with lungs He gave, two feet to stand on God's green earth, every heartbeat and brainwave is a gracious gift of our Creator. All who think otherwise should show how easy it is to make just one of these hands, of which God gives two. Ask a farmer or woodworker whether his surgically restored hand works as well as before. Using all God's things, what is our attitude? We call it "nature" as if it just happened. But when things go wrong, our first thought is to blame God. Even if we're not polluters of God's planet, if someone suggests we owe Him, we hide our money like some ungrateful woodshop invader.

In my dream I was so angry that *Small Catechism* picture flashed of Cain standing over Abel after Cain ignored God's warnings. Jesus **Our Brother** warns, "**Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.**" (1 John 3:15 NIV) Ever thought about mounting a machine gun on your car? The kindest soul may be hurting her own body by neglect or worse. Where does that come from? Jesus says, "**Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.**" (Matthew 15:19 NIV) Sins of the heart are still sins.

So why would **Our Brother** want us in **God's family**? If only Hollywood could focus on this true miracle of Christmas: *In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists – Creation is everywhere in the Bible! – should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."*

Think about **God's** goal for His **family**: the *glory* of heaven. And how does the Creator work this? He makes the *Author of our salvation* reach God's goal through suffering. For Jesus to be God's

perfect Savior, He could not be like a football player in full pads who never gets into a game. Jesus had to suit up to suffer shame when His family walked 30 miles to take Him away crazy for preaching the Good News and healing the sick. Jesus had to learn by experience what it's like to feel *deeply distressed* by stubborn unbelievers (Mark 3:21,5). **“Jesus is not ashamed to call [us] brothers,”** with all our doubts and fears, hurtful dreams and foolish imaginations. **Our Brother Can Help** by making us holy. His saving *name*-reputation gives us a new birth certificate in our Baptism. He declares our heavenly Father's love and sings God's praises for us. Jesus made Himself small and vulnerable in order to **“put [His] trust”** in God just like us. Jesus calls us God's gifts to Him: **“Here am I, and the children God has given me.”** **Our Brother Can Help** – because He wants to, and because He has absolute power...

✠ In hard times (vv.14-18)

Shaking hands one Sunday afternoon at Mount Olive Chinese Church, I struggled to remember whether I had previously met a young Chinese woman. Finally I had to apologize because I had her confused with someone else. She said very kindly, “That's okay. You all look alike to us too.”

Jesus suited up to become one of us: **“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity....”** Ancient myths picture gods coming down to earth. Yet “no founder of any other religion dreamed of dying for his followers. Buddha shunned death until he was eighty. Confucius and Zoroaster did not conceive of...sacrificing themselves for the good of others. Mohammed established his religion by killing rather than by being killed. Heathen religions may contain some admirable precepts, but not one of them has a redeemer. Jesus Christ alone gave his life to save a lost world.”¹

What did Jesus accomplish by sacrificing Himself? **“He too shared in [our] humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”** You wonder why people do crazy things? They *fear...death*. Old beer commercials even said, “You only go around once; go for the gusto.” The lonely faces of forgotten souls in nursing homes cannot mask the *fear of death*. But **Our Brother Can Help – In hard times** for young and old. **“For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.”** The God of Abraham promised his Offspring would bless all nations on earth. (Genesis 22:18) And the Bible identifies him as Jesus. (Galatians 3:16) He faced off with the devil, suffered death and came to life again. Satan's ultimate weapon is powerless. Jesus raised Himself; He can raise us too.

“For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” This *high priest* is the ultimate Mediator. As the God-Man, Jesus understands and perfectly represents God and Man. By washing away the sin-separator, Jesus made us “at one” with God, holy in His sight, growing with Jesus in faith and wisdom. Maybe no one else understands how you feel, but Jesus has been to hell and back for you, proclaiming His victory. **Our Brother Can Help – In hard times** because, **“God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”** (1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV)

Consider one example to take peace home to your heart. Remember what Jesus said as they nailed Him to the cross? **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”** (Luke 23:34 NIV) With **Our Brother** helping you in real life, you can conquer that coworker or fellow student who makes you so angry. Kindly ask your heavenly Father to do for them what Jesus did for you. Pray that they be forgiven. You may see a miracle like one of our members years ago. His hard hearted co-worker became a lifelong friend. How would such a victory in Christ bless fellow members of your church or family who irritate and upset you? **Our Brother Can Help** you pray, **“Father, forgive them** as you forgive me.” Then your sleep will be peaceful and sweet at night with memories good by day. Jesus takes all the heartache away. What a glorious Gift from God **Our Brother!** In Jesus' precious Name. Amen.

¹ A.C. Dixon, quoted in R.C. Rein's *Treasury of Themes and Illustrations*. Milwaukee, WI: NPH, 1983, ref. 632.