**Hebrews 2:10-18 10Certainly it was fitting for God (the one for whom and through whom everything exists), in leading many sons to glory, to bring the author of their salvation to his goal through sufferings. 11For he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified all have one Father. For that reason, he is not ashamed to call them brothers. 12He says: I will declare your name to my brothers. Within the congregation I will sing your praise. 13And again: I will trust in him. And again: Here I am and the children God has given me. 14Therefore, since the children share flesh and blood, he also shared the same flesh and blood, so that through death he could destroy the one who had the power of death (that is, the Devil) 15and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. 16For surely he was not concerned with helping angels but with helping Abraham’s offspring. 17For this reason, he had to become like his brothers in every way, in order that he would be a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, so that he could pay for the sins of the people. 18Indeed, because he suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

What Child Is This? Our Substitute and Sacrifice

“What Child Is This?” is a hard Christmas hymns to sing. It’s a wonder that the hymn is in the hymnal at all because it’s just so difficult. Should it be sung quickly or should it be slow? If quickly: it’s hard to get the rhythm right. If slow: there are long phrases before you get to breathe. It covers 16 notes in just over an octave.

It’s hard because the words are hard. They aren’t hard to understand. No, all the words are clear. The concepts presented are deep. So simple but so hard to grasp. The ideas baffle our brain because the question they raise seems too majestic to be believed.

It’s hard because the words themselves are hard for me to sing. Here’s a reason why: I don’t like coming out of my life. I never have. I don’t like to come out. It’s my life. It’s my position. I’m my life’s starter. I’m the one who is to live this life. If someone gets the better of me, it just pushes me to get them back the next time. I will try harder. When I need to, I will give my all to play up to their level. I am a slave to leaving it all out there because without it all that remains is that I would not be enough. I can’t stand having to be pulled out of my spot and needing to have someone else do it. It’s just shameful to me.

It’s shameful to not complete what needs to be done and admit failure and inadequacy. It’s shameful to have attention drawn to messes made and remade. And then to have to have someone else clean it up. That’s hard to say.

Yet, here we are with our sins—the uber mess to beat all over messes. So big. So great. There’s nothing good about it. There’s no glory in looking at how sinful our lives are. We don’t even want our families to know the vastness of our sins because even just some of them make it hard to be around each other. And now our mess is seen by our Father in heaven? We are the sons and daughters who boldly, quietly, or sheepishly disobey him. He sees, knows, checks when we’ve been bad or…let’s not kid ourselves, our bads, our sins, don’t even allow room for any goods. We have to be taken out of our life.

That’s what is sung about in the hymn “What Child Is This?” It’s about that we need another to take us out of our lives that are disgraceful and live our life for us. **Certainly it was fitting for God (the one for whom and through whom everything exists), in leading many sons to glory, to bring the author of their salvation to his goal through sufferings.**It’s hard to see. It’s hard to see God need to go in for us. He had clearly given his goal—glory. He told us how to achieve it. Now, he has to do it for us. It’s below him to do. He’s better than that. He’s greater than that. It’s worse than asking God to put on a diaper. Worse than needing God to be hungry and thirsty. He is the one who speaks and all things came into being and now he needs to learn to speak. It’s hard because it’s painful to watch what God saw fit to do.

What Child is This? Our Substitute. Talk about suffering. The worse kind of suffering because it’s belittling to God to make himself less. Yet, he puts aside all of the embarrassment that comes from being associated with us sinners and instead suffers for us. Certain things just shouldn’t happen. This is one of them. We ought not to be allowed to be close to God. We ought not to be thought of by God. God ought to ignore our misery and leave us to our own messes. Here he is though with his goal in mind, **leading many sons to glory…through sufferings.**

Worse than a diaper, hungry, thirst, not having the words but including all of those things, how shameful that God would put on the jersey of sinfulness with flesh and blood. God becomes a slave to human concerns. God becomes bound to live within the lines he set in place at creation. God needing to do all the human things. It’s embarrassing to see God needing to do such things. But that’s what a substitute is—someone who willing steps in when others fail to be able to do what needs to be done.

Such concern showed to us who don’t deserve it. Such concern displayed to remove our greatest fear. Such concern lived to free us from the power of death. Even a death to release us from slavery. What child is this? This is Christ the Lord our substitute and our sacrifice.

It’s also a beautiful picture. A baby growing into a boy sitting to learn into a man who walked around caring for people until he dies on the cross to claim us as his siblings and rises from the dead to triumph over all things. The great God like act gets us to scratch our heads as to why God would possibly do such a thing as to give himself completely to help us. **Indeed, because he suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.** He is our help because he is one of us. Giving his all to bring us to glory; glory he wrote when he created the world and rewrote when he sacrificed himself completely for us.

What Child is this? This is our Savior, Jesus. His bring our substitute and sacrifice is summed up for us in Jesus’ title of High Priest. He is God and man serving both people and God to bring them back together by giving both what they needed most. God needing a payment, a sacrifice, for sin. People needing a substitute who would carry out and fix all the sins we have brought to life.

What Child is This? is hard to sing but I can’t figure out for sure what the reason is exactly. I don’t know if it’s because it’s horrible to see what God had to do or because the awe of what God was willing to do just makes the words seem like not enough. Either way, this is the Savior we needed both substitute and sacrifice. Amen.

Questions to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* Jesus being our substitute and sacrifice is summed up for us in Jesus’ title of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* Why did Jesus have to become human like us?
* What comfort do we get in everyday life from the fact that Jesus faced the same things we do?