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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 23, 2014
3rd Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Genesis 22:1-19; Passion: Trial and Denial

Hymns: 388; 156; 158; 173:1-2 (248:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Hebrews 5:1-10

For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. 3 Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. 4 And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him:

“You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.”

6 As He also says in another place:

“You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek”;

7 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, 8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, 10 called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Approaching Jesus’ Passion from a different Perspective

AS we meditate upon the Lord’s Passion it is natural for us to consider His sufferings and death from a gentile’s perspective from the time of fulfillment. After all Jesus fulfilled all the Scriptures in His life, death and resurrection concerning the Christ and our salvation. In the Epistle to the Hebrews one may look at this work of Christ from the Jewish perspective, and their worship of God leading up to Jesus’ Passion. The Spirit would grant us a fuller understanding of the blessings of our salvation by presenting Jesus to us as --

THEME: The High Priest of Our Salvation.

From this perspective it is revealed that Jesus was –

I. The Right Man for the Job.

Our text, which was written first written for an audience of Jewish Christians, assumes a familiarity with the priestly office. That role is capsulized in just a few words:

Hebrews 5:1 “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.”

So for one to be a good High Priest one must be good “**at things pertaining to God.**” People need someone to fill that role for them, and it can’t be just anybody that might take it upon themselves because they think they would like to give it a try. It has to be the right person.

This reminds of a TV commercial in which the auto mechanic finishes fixing someone’s car and then they suggest that he move on to the heart surgery the person needs done. NO, when I need my car fixed I want a good mechanic, but if I need surgery I want the best doctor, the best surgeon available. It is not a role for the unqualified. Neither is the role of High Priest for one who does not understand the one and only way to God.

From the beginning of the priesthood, back with Aaron who was appointed by God a Sinai, priests could relate to the people they served because they shared the same weaknesses. They understood that in the weakness of the flesh and in ignorance people often stumbled into sin, and needed one to go before them to God with sacrifices and prayers and offerings for their sin. Sins of weakness were also found among the priests, and made it necessary for them to offer up sacrifices for their own sins also. So

they were less than perfect. With that being the case it was especially important to understand that they weren't in that position because of their moral perfection, but because God had appointed them to fill the office. So it was that God appointed Aaron, and his descendants to follow after him, to fill the office of High Priest. They did not take the honor upon themselves.

So also Jesus did not take the office upon Himself. He also was appointed by God. The psalmist prophesied concerning this, that the Christ was to be superior to the other High Priests who had gone before Him. He would possess not just honor, but also glory!

Our text quotes Psalm 2 as the prophecy speaking of the glory that was to be the Christ's alone. **“You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.”**

Jesus, the Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father. As such He possesses divine glory and honor, and as the Christ He is the one appointed by God to serve as our High Priest. Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at the time of His baptism, that all might know and believe that Jesus is the Christ of God who fills this office according to the will of God.

Immediately our text quotes from Psalm 110, another of the Messianic psalms. This psalm proclaims the Christ to be High Priest of a higher order than those who came from Aaron's line. **“You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek”** (v.6).

This speaks to that point of having **the right man for the job!** Jesus as the Son of God, was perfect and holy, and higher than any man. His connection to God was

superior! Things we need handled for us before God, you know, like our sin, our guilt, our condemnation to eternal death, could be handled before God better by Jesus than by anyone else! He was and IS God's only Son, after all!

And the matter of Jesus being from a different priestly order, that Jesus was not from the Levitical order of the house of Aaron, but from the order of Melchizedek is also to our advantage. Consider just these two things:

1. **Melchizedek was also a king with power to rule.** He was called the King of Salem, which means King of Peace. This is what Jesus as our High Priest is also for us. God entrusted ruling power to His Son, our Lord Jesus. He entrusted all power to Jesus that through Jesus **peace** might reign, that there be peace between God and man.

2. And the second point pertains especially for us. There is no beginning or end recorded of Melchizedek, and so God the Father declares of the Christ, **You are priest forever.** We are assured that all Jesus accomplished as Priest holds true and valid for us yet today, even though we live 200 thousand years after Jesus died on the cross.

That brings us to exactly how Jesus went about --

II. Successfully Filling the Office of High Priest.

If we learn anything from the Passion History of Christ, we learn that the mission that was laid before the Lord Jesus was not an easy one to bear. And that is exactly what the inspired author wanted Christian's then and now to recall.

Hebrews 5:7-8 *Jesus*, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, & though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

The Spirit reminds us of the scene in Gethsemane, and the dread, and the deep sorrow that filled the Savior's heart as He looked forward to the excruciating ordeal, both physically and spiritually **excruciating** ordeal that lay before Him. Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven that if it be possible this cup be taken from Him. Jesus prayed more earnestly, and even yet more earnestly with vehement cries and tears. He prayed so earnestly that His sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground. This was what it cost the Lord Jesus to be your High Priest! He was heard by the Father, and the Father sent that angel to minister to Him, but the task still lay before Jesus. There was no other way to win for us salvation than for Jesus to go forward and meet His enemies, and suffer at their hands, and be cursed by God for OUR sins.

Our text then says: "**The Son learned obedience by the things He suffered.**" Wasn't He always obedient to the Father's will? Yes, indeed He was, and that is exactly what we are led to appreciate. In spite of the deep woe that lay upon Jesus' mind and heart, He submitted to the Father's will because it was what WE needed for OUR salvation! He did all and endured all that the Father placed before Him, and --

1 Peter 2:23-24 when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24

who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

He did it all, endured it all, and did so in perfect holiness, so that we might have salvation through faith in His name, just as our text teaches us.

Hebrews 5:9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

This concept doesn't come across so well in American English. It wasn't that Jesus was something less than perfect before His sufferings and death, but rather that He had not yet fulfilled His mission. In that way He was not complete, for unless He went to the cross and suffered and died and rose again, He would not be our Savior. To be our great High Priest He had to present the necessary sacrifice to God, the one sacrifice that was more than a symbol, the one sacrifice that really, once for all, satisfied divine justice and freed mankind from death and hell.

And so Jesus offered that sacrifice when He offered Himself for us upon the cross. He offered that sacrifice and was able to declare at the end of His sufferings, "**It is finished.**" He drank the very dregs of the cup of the wrath of God, and so by His stripes, by His nail prints, by all His sufferings, **we are set free.** All this He did for us as our High Priest.

Know it and believe it, for it is only when we grasp this truth in our hearts by faith that we possess the benefit of all the Savior did for us. Your faith in Christ is a most precious gift which the Lord has given you. You know and love the Lord, and the will of God for you to obey is

simply to believe in Him whom He has sent. When we rely on the merits of Christ for life and salvation, then we also shall desire to honor Him and glorify Him with our lives. We will seek to submit our fleshly desires for the holy will of God. And yes, we will still struggle with the weakness of our flesh, but each day we strive to live in repentance and faith, remembering Jesus, and what he has done and still does for us As our High Priest.

There was never a priest like Jesus, and there will never be again. This is the One --

Hebrews 5:10 “called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Jesus and only Jesus could make the necessary sacrifice because only Jesus as the true Son of God was precious enough to redeem the whole world. Only Jesus as the true Son of Man could be our substitute, taking our place in sacrificing Himself for us, and yet perfectly understanding us and sympathizing with us in our trials and temptations. Only Jesus Christ as true God and true Man, having completed the mission of our salvation, could intercede for us before the throne of God. Only Jesus could be both that Priest who serves us so well, and that King who rules our hearts with His grace, and instills within us His everlasting peace.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.