

Jesus as Priest

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Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0 : 0 0] Well, thank you, worship team, and thank you, orchestra, for leading us into worship today.! What a joy it is during Christmas season to have such a gifted group of musicians and leaders to usher us into Christ's presence.

I want to just express my own gratitude to all of you in your generosity in the harvest offering. We exceeded our expectation, and so I thank you for your contribution to the harvest offering and partnership with our missionaries in those substantial ways. Looking forward to being able to be a... Yeah, go ahead. Let's thank the Lord together. Thank you. It's a true and living word of God.

[1 : 2 9] This morning, we come to Jesus as priest. Imagine with me, if you would, a man who is standing outside of his house. It was a door that used to swing freely, but now that door is shut.

It's locked. Inside those rooms, as he's looking in, there's warmth, there's light, there's presence, and someone he loves. But now the door is locked.

But now the door is locked. Now the key is gone. And no amount of banging on that door will open it up. You can see the light under the door, but he cannot enter.

He needs someone on the inside. Someone untouched. Someone with full access to open that door for him. You see, this is the story of Adam.

The story that we will look at as we move through the Genesis record and see not only our need for a priest, for a mediator, but the answer that we get to enjoy in the person of Jesus Christ.

[2 : 3 7] Adam, who was once welcomed by the presence of God, who enjoyed that fellowship with God in an intimate, consistent way. But now he's standing outside.

Now he's locked out. Now there is no key, no access, no way back. And the story of Scripture will become the story of God who will mediate for this son, this Adam, this first person of humanity. Opening this door that Adam actually closed. Last week we were reminded of this greater prophet, this word of God that had come to us. The prophet whose words would prove true and dependable and reliable.

We got to see that God provides this ultimate word through his son, Jesus. And this ultimate word, this true word, is important because true faith depends on a true word.

True faith depends on this message of God in the very words, life-giving words of God to change our hearts. And as we move through this Christmas season, this little baby that we celebrate during Advent and during Christmas, while he came as a picture of innocence and sweetness, we see that God had sent his son, his very son, the word of God, had been made flesh and dwelt among us.

[4 : 0 7] This clear, authoritative, living word of God. And we're going to see through this series the significance of the ministry of Jesus.

What did this ministry bring? Well, as a prophet, Jesus brings the word of God. As a priest, this morning we're going to see that he brings the presence of God.

As a king, he will bring the rule of God. And as a shepherd, Jesus will bring the very heart of God. Today we see that Jesus Christ is this perfect priest.

This priest that ushered in God's presence. This is accentuated by two instances in Scripture. When the presence of God came because through the temple and through the tabernacle, we see that the presence of God was ushered in.

How did the priestly ministry accomplish this? That's what we're going to look at this morning. And what were the elements involved? And how did Jesus' life encompass the fullness of this priestly, mediatorial ministry to us?

[5 : 1 8] This is the catchphrase I want us to remember as we work through this together. That priests lived in God's presence. They guarded God's presence and reopened the way back into

God's presence.

Everything they did was an expression of the calling to usher in this presence of God. So we turn our attention again. And every week, we're going to turn our attention to Hebrews 1, verses 1-3. It's kind of the introduction to our time together. And a reminder of this work of God for us. Not only as prophet and priest, but also as king. And here we see in Hebrews 1, verses 1-3.

The exalted priestly son. This exalted priestly son. Look at this with me. Hebrews 1, verse 1 says, Long ago, at many times, and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

[6 : 33] And he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

God here reveals his presence through the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. He's the very radiance of an image, an imprint of God's nature.

This mediative role that Jesus had, and we're going to see throughout this book of Hebrews, is this role of ushering in the presence of God.

We see many functions. And I want to just touch on them briefly, and then develop them as we go along. We see here, in Hebrews 1, verses 1 to 3, especially in verse 3, we see that through his ministry, that Jesus as priest addresses our need for purification.

Our need for purification. Do you see that at the end of verse 3? After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

[7 : 44] Through Jesus' ministry, we can enjoy purification. Where do you struggle to believe that God really receives you and welcomes you, in spite of the sin that you have sinned?

That his arms are open, that he is available as this purifying, sanctifying Savior? Savior, this morning we'll see and be reminded of the fact we serve a God who purifies, who sanctifies, who desires to make us like his Son.

We also see in Hebrews 2, verses 17 and 18, that this priestly ministry of Jesus addresses our need for a propitiation.

Notice Hebrews 2, 17 says this, Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service to God, to make propitiation for sins of the people.

For because he himself has suffered, when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Are you in a position of recognizing the gravity of your sin?

[8 : 59] Have you come to a place of seeing that you are weak and unable, unfit to address the heart issues of your sin? You have a God, a priest, the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ, who makes a way.

Propitiation is just a fancy word for saying appeasement. That God has made a way. He has allowed us to enjoy the benefits of his kindness and grace through his son, Jesus Christ.

We can gain favor because the work of Christ, the priestly work of Christ, has satisfied the demand.

The demand that sin has. Where Jesus was willing to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross.

We find in Hebrews 4, 15, that Christ, through his priestly ministry, addressed our need for pity. Our need for pity. Notice Hebrews 4, 14, 15 says this, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.

Let us with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find help, find grace to help in time of need. Every place where we feel weak is a place where Christ understands us deeply.

[10 : 30] We are never coming to a priest who rolls his eyes, who says they did it again. We are coming to a priest who sympathizes, who understands, who presses in, a priest who is accessible, a priest who wants to address the deepest needs in pity, in sympathy, in mercy, in grace.

If you are feeling like an outsider, Jesus beckons you as priest to come and enjoy the benefits of his care and tenderness to address the sins of your life.

We also find his priestly ministry that addresses our need for permanence. In Hebrews 7, verses 23 to 24, it says this, it says, the former priests were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office.

But he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever. 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.

You serve an eternal priest, a God who is always living and he always is there to address the needs, the sin needs that you have.

[11 : 53] He continues forever. He's not like those priests that come and go. He is that priest who remains. The permanence of his priesthood is what we need. We also see in chapter 7, verse 26 and 27, that he addresses our need for perfection.

Anyone who is honest with himself will know that they are not perfect. We've said that. You've probably said those very words. Well, I'm not perfect. And of course that's true and it's addressed by the perfection of our high priest.

Notice Hebrews 7, 26. For it was indeed fitting that we should have a high priest holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens.

He has no need like those high priests to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

We have a perfect high priest who has covered sin once for all. We need his perfect priestly ministry that Jesus brings to us.

[13 : 06] And in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 14, it says, for by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

We have a perfect high priest. This priest that we're going to see was an intermediary. He was a mediator. He was a go-between.

He stood between those who had sinned in bringing them to God. That was the goal. To lead people to God spiritually. Jesus did this for us by atoning for our sin and priests leading up to that point would also atone for sin in a very temporary way through sacrifices.

But how did this priestly office evolve? How did we come to need a priest? And for that we need to go all the way back to the beginning. Why do we need a mediator?

Why do we need this priestly ministry? Well you remember the story of Adam going all the way back to Genesis chapter 1. You know in this story that Adam was sinless.

[14 : 14] He walked with God. And if you remember the story he enjoyed this fellowship this unbroken fellowship with God. You see Adam and Eve were made in God's image and likeness and they were given directives as related to worship and fellowship and work and they followed those instructions perfectly and carefully and they enjoyed this perfect fellowship with God.

They lived out and carried out that mandate. There was no need for a mediator because there was no separation. There was no guilt. There was no distance.

God's presence was open. It was natural. It was unguarded. And Adam and Eve walked with God freely and fully. But remember that God had given them a command.

Right? And that command was given to them from the very beginning that that command that they should not eat of the tree in the midst of the garden and you remember what would happen if they ate of that fruit.

The day you eat of that fruit you shall surely die. This tree of good and evil and God uses Adam as this mouthpiece to his wife to share in a prophetic sense this word from God to his wife.

[15 : 38] And you know the story. At some point along the way Satan tempted Eve and Eve gave this fruit to her husband. The two of them ate and sin entered the world.

Now what was open is closed. now this relationship that was once secure is severed. God's presence which was near is now distant.

What was whole is now broken. What was welcomed is now barred. This harmony has now led to hostility. What once was accessible is now guarded.

Adam's sin introduced this need for a mediator because he drove his sin drove humanity from God's presence.

Presence was the issue. Sin was the issue that drove Adam and Eve away from the presence of God. And when Adam sinned the entire spiritual landscape changed.

[16 : 45] The way back is guarded. Fellowship is broken. Sin blocks access from the presence of God. For the very first time in history Adam would need a mediator.

He would need a go-between. Somebody who could stand. Who could represent him to God. Someone who could bridge the gap. Someone who was on the outside who could let him in.

But Adam cannot serve his own mediator. Because mediation requires another party. Just like the individual who is drowning.

Needs somebody outside who is able to rescue that drowning individual. You see Adam is exiled. He's cut off. He's on the wrong side of the flaming sword.

And you remember in the Garden of Eden the flaming sword that was put in the way to guard the presence guard Adam and Eve away from the presence of God.

[17 : 46] I imagine that some of you even in this moment can resonate with feeling distant. With feeling cut off. Feeling isolated from God because of your sin.

And just like Adam you have been cut off because of sin. But the story doesn't end here. There is a way. God has provided a mediator.

And here is the absolutely essential thing for us to understand. God cannot himself perform Adam's atonement in the garden.

He cannot do this in his divine capacity alone because this go-between needs someone to represent both man and God. You see God cannot make payment for Adam's sin at this point because if he did it would violate his own design for mediation.

Why? Because redemption requires a true mediator. A real son of Adam in the physical flesh. Someone who is capable of representing him to God.

[18 : 56] If God simply atoned for Adam there in Genesis chapter 3. If God simply atoned for Adam and we understand those skins that have been used as coverings and it's sometimes infrequently mentioned that those skins represent atonement but they cannot.

They cannot because if God had atoned for Adam then the pattern of human representation collapses. The priesthood becomes unnecessary because God has already bridged the gap. The promised seed of the woman is emptied of meaning and the entire Christological foundation of scripture then disintegrates. God cannot bypass the need for a human mediator.

So what are these coverings? What are these coverings? Well we find the answer in Genesis chapter 3 verse 7. And notice that Adam and Eve are the initiators of needing these coverings. It says then the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

[20 : 12] Adam and Eve did this. Why? It was a self covering. This is a human effort to deal with guilt and shame and sin.

So they make coverings for themselves and the Hebrew is emphatic when it says they sewed fig leaves they made coverings self effort humanly driven to cover this shame. This was a human attempt to resolve a spiritual problem. And it's the first picture by the way of humans trying to manage the effects of sin without removing the sin.

That sin was not gone it remained it was just covered up. And all they could do was cover their shame not atone for their sin.

So then what is happening in Genesis chapter 3 verse 21 it says in the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

[21 : 16] Notice that the language here is the same. Here's what the text does say God made coverings God clothed them God provides for their inadequate attempt and he allows now this covering to have some level of permanence.

God makes permanent what Adam and Eve made temporary. And here's what the text does not say and why we need to be so careful about reading into the scripture.

It does not say that God sacrificed an animal. It does not say that garments symbolize atonement. It does not say that their shame was removed because they are still driven out of the garden.

It does not say that their relationship was restored. which is what would have happened if their sin had been atoned for. It doesn't say that their access was regained.

They're still driven out. Their shame remains, their fear remains, their alienation remains, and the way back is barred.

[22 : 22] It's blocked. So their coverings stand as this perpetual reminder of their nakedness. And it tends to be a gift that God has given to them to help them understand perpetually their shame.

That sin has produced shame and guilt. God, while he improves Adam's covering, he does not remove Adam's guilt.

that human covering is a hiding from shame. This divine covering becomes a measure of protection in the midst of shame. God does not atone for them, but instead it sets the stage for a human

mediator.

We need a human mediator. That is still what is on the table as we continue to move through this story. So God promises that sin will be resolved. And we find that answer in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 where God promises Eve.

Remember he says I will put enmity between you and the serpent I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

[23 : 37] This mediative work, this priestly function will happen through a son. This mediator, this go between, this human representative which will represent Adam to God and God to humanity.

But now we begin to see this insufficiency of this human mediator. Why was Adam's son an insufficient mediator? You see God does raise up a son.

The son named Abel we see in Genesis chapter 4 verses 1 to 5 it says now Adam knew his wife Eve and she conceived and bore Cain saying I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord and again she bore his brother Abel now Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a worker of the ground in the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground and Abel also brought the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions and the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering but for Cain and his offering he had no regard so Cain was very angry and his face fell we see right out of the gate this priestly mediative role that is now beginning to take place and Abel stands beside Cain as this immediate test case this immediate test case of Genesis chapter 3 15 would God provide a true mediator and now we see these two sons

Cain and Abel and these two seeds we see these two lines we see these two forms of worship one that's accepted one that is not accepted we see these two spiritual destinies Abel becomes the first post fall worshiper who approaches God rightly the right offering the right way with the right heart with obedience and with faith and we see the example of Abel and the testimony of his righteous sacrifice written across the pages of Hebrews chapter 11 Abel stands before God as a faithful son of Adam and the most likely candidate of a human representative others follow an Abel's pattern Noah which who will mediate for his family Noah excuse me Abraham who will intercede for his family Job as we saw in our study who intercedes and offers sacrifices for his family but each shares

Adam's fallen nature each requires atonement of his own each mediator needs a mediator needs a priest to represent him to God none can fully mediate for themselves because of imperfection because of sin in their life every son of Adam inherits Adam's sin Romans chapter 5 verse 12 says therefore just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin so death spread to all men because all sin yet death reigned from Adam to Moses even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam who was a type of the one who was to come therefore no child of Adam could ever qualify as this human mediator this representation this representative who would represent

[27 : 22] Adam's race to God why because all of Adam's children inherit corruption none can stand in the presence of God for others that presence is still shut that presence is still closed so how will God resolve this human problem you know based upon what we've read in Hebrews that God raises up his final son this final son Jesus only a divine son can become a human representative who can represent men to God and represent God to men and only the God man can enter God's presence without fear and bring his people near with confidence Jesus is that mediator Jesus is that priest he's the true son of Adam he's the true seed of

Abraham he's the heir of David's throne all the genealogies converge on Christ he's the one who can now represent man to God as the true and final high priest it's all encapsulated in summary probably the best summary we get of Christ's ministry is found for us in 1st Peter chapter 3 verse 18 see it or listen to it as I read for Christ also suffered once for sin the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit all the components are there Jesus as the mediator who is able to usher us into the very presence of God Jesus himself who was just and righteous and holy who met the standard who only was the only representative who could stand as a perfect reflection of

God's nature and he's being put to death in his flesh and made alive by the spirit this summary of the righteous work of the ultimate mediator Jesus who stands in our place he does this in order to bring us to God Jesus as that perfect representative of humanity is able to finally do the work of mediation he's finally able to lead us into the presence of God that he might bring us to God and

now through Christ the way that was once guarded the fellowship that was once broken the sin that once blocked access is all obliterated because Jesus is able to mediate for us he's the one who's able to deal with the sins that we bring to the table but then we come to this this very interesting plot twist we come to this plot twist of this mediator who needs no mediation

Jesus now emerges not only as the mediator not only as the priest but Jesus emerges as this new son this new Adam as it were this new figurehead this new representative that now those who are in line and who participate in Jesus as the new Adam can enjoy the benefits of this mediative work Jesus stands utterly alone in redemptive history he is the only mediator that never needs a mediator never needs a go between he is the new representative head of humanity he is the faithful firstborn he is the beginning of a new line of sons and daughters where Adam fell Jesus stands where Adam lost access Jesus restores the access where Adam required a mediator Jesus is the mediator this is the storyline of the

Bible this is the storyline of redemption this is the story of the perfect Adam our savior Jesus Christ as Paul says in Romans chapter 5 verses 17 and 19 it says for if because of one man one man's trespass death reigned through that one man much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ therefore as one trespass led to condemnation for all men so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men for as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners so by the obedience one man's obedience many will be made righteous this ministry of the new Adam for all those who are now in

[32 : 53] Christ through faith in the Lord Jesus and forgiveness of sins and recognizing that he is the only priest who can mediate for your sins this is the only way in to access with God again through the sinless son who becomes the perfect mediator Jesus is the new and perfect Adam to close out our time this morning just by looking at what does this superior sacrifice of the priestly son accomplish and there's more time for this subject that we have time for this morning but I want to just draw your attention to a couple of passages in Hebrews again drawing us back to the book of Hebrews to see what does Christ's priestly ministry accomplish for us beginning with Hebrews chapter 9 verses 11 to 14 but when Christ appeared as high priest of the good things that have come then through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands that is not only of this creation he entered once for all into the holy place not by means of blood and goats and calves but by means of his own blood thus securing an eternal redemption

Jesus enters the greater and more perfect tent not by the blood of bulls and goats but by his own blood because a true mediator must offer a true sacrifice and Jesus offered that sacrifice through his precious blood it's the precious blood of Christ that we have forgiveness of sins remission of sins are you in Jesus have you enjoyed the benefits of that covering eternal blood the blood of Christ who mediates for you who makes a way through himself so that we can enjoy the benefits of forgiveness and cleansing and redemption this true mediator who's offered this true sacrifice for you we also see the finality of his priesthood in in Hebrews chapter 10 verses 19 through 22 therefore brothers since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of

Jesus by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain or that veil that is through his flesh! since we have a great priest over the house of God let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water you see through Jesus' finished work the veil is torn into that which separated us from the presence of God and those of you who understand that this picture that's woven throughout the Old Testament that veil was in the temple and it kept even the priest from being able to enter into the holy of holies to enjoy and experience the wonder of the very presence of God but through Christ's death and sacrifice and his resurrection those who are in Christ get to enjoy that veil that! is God is possible through faith in Jesus Christ I wonder this morning if some of you approach God like he's still behind the veil I wonder if there are some of you this morning who in understanding and recognizing your sin think your sin is too great for God to overcome there is guilt and shame in your own heart there is an unwillingness to recognize that God's power is able to even forgive those sins however wretched they might be that you're still standing behind the veil as it were you're still separated from that intimate fellowship that you might experience with God but God has made a way through his mediator Jesus Christ and the priest his high priestly!

ministry he has made a way for you to enjoy fellowship with him through in Christ the veil isn't just torn it's gone it's gone there is no door to knock on anymore because your priest says come on in we find this picture of Jesus in revelation I stand at the door and knock and his knocking is that anyone who would hear his voice and enter in they will come and enjoy fellowship and supping with him enjoying fellowship with the great high priest your high priest has made a way have you enjoyed this priestly ministry of the son this great high priest who can sympathize and understand not only your weaknesses but also your rebellion he's experienced those weaknesses himself he's endured those temptations he's done it without sin so that he can make a way as the mediator who needs no mediator to welcome us him to fellowship with

[38 : 34] God do you know the Lord Jesus the high priest the ultimate mediator for sin that's the joy that we have even in this moment as you consider do you know Jesus have you come to a place in your life of bowing your knee to Christ confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and you will be saved what a joy what a privilege I would plead with you if you have never come to a place of inviting Jesus to do that work of mediating and priestly ministry in your life today's the day myself Pastor David raise your hand Pastor John raise your hand we would love to answer questions we would love to invite you in as this surrogate mediator as it were to help introduce you to who Jesus is so you can enjoy his mediative work for yourself let me pray oh God

I thank you for your son and his high priestly ministry to us and what Adam spoiled Jesus has saved you've made a way you've opened that door that was blocked and I pray this morning if anyone here today has been blocked either by this perpetual sin in their life or these feelings of guilt and shame whatever it is Lord I pray that you would help them even in these moments to see the beauty and wonder of this mediative high priest who can sympathize who has pity who has made a way Lord please make a way for them even now as your spirit is working in their life help them not to resist but help them to step in and Lord for the rest of us I pray that our lives would be a model of this mediative work that we would stand as go between as well as those who represent the message that you have given through your son and a desire to bridge the gap to welcome others to enjoy the same benefits of this work

Lord may you be pleased this Christmas season to bring many sons to glory we pray in Jesus name Amen