

Jesus Our Priest

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- [0 : 0 0] Father in heaven, we thank you that Jesus is our priest. We ask, Father, by your grace that we will draw near with faith in full assurance of your goodness towards us.
- Speak to us through your word by the work of the Holy Spirit. And change our minds and our hearts that we might be faithful to you through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Amen. Please be seated. Amen. Well, I want to begin with a disclaimer. I'm not going to use PowerPoint this morning. This laptop is here because it decided to break off all contact with anything outside itself this morning before I came to church.
- So I couldn't print anything or email or anything. So it's here on the on the computer. So I'm not advertising Apple or anything like that. I hope you're not distracted by it. Somebody said at nine o'clock that they felt like eating an apple all morning.
- But that was the only distraction that came from it. So just ignore this. It's it'll help me, though. The what we're doing this morning is we're looking at a second part of a series that we're doing on the three offices or the three roles of mediation between God and humanity.
- [1 : 1 4] That is in the kingdom of Israel. Do you remember that there were people set aside by God for a special purpose of mediation? They were the priests of Israel.
- They were the prophets of Israel. And there was the king. And that Jesus fulfills these roles perfectly because in Jesus, God is the mediator because Jesus is God.
- He takes away the need for human mediators and he perfectly fulfills those offices where God represents himself to the people and the prophet. And the people represent themselves to God in the priest.
- And the king is the representative on God's behalf as his kingship over the people as well. And last week we talked about how humanity has this deep need to hear from one that is greater than us, from one who has created us, one who knows the purpose of our life, the meaning of life, the meaning of this world.
- We need to hear from the one who has made and designed everything. And so last week we talked in Acts 3 about Jesus being the author of life, who has made the world, who has brought eternal life into the world.
- [2 : 3 1] And when we hear Jesus speak, we are hearing God himself speak. And in that sense, he is our prophet, but much greater than a prophet because Jesus is God's word.
- All the prophets spoke about him, that he would suffer for the world, for the saving of that world. And if you remember in God's word of the transfiguration on the mountain, he very powerfully and clearly says these words, Jesus is my beloved son, listen to him.
- And I hope those words that God gave so clearly has been with you in this past week. That as you read the Bible, as you hear him preached, as you study Jesus together in his word, that you listen, that you hear God speaking to you.
- Because in Jesus, you know God, you know his will for the world and for your life. You know yourself, you know him. You understand what and who you were made to be.

Well, there's another great need. Not only this great gift of being able to hear from God, that God speaks to us, but we also have a need to be at peace with God and those around us.

[3 : 45] And that is the longings of all religion. It is to be in right relationship with God. I don't know how many of you have been to places of worship in this city.

You know, every religion is represented in Vancouver. There's a stretch in the city where I live, in Richmond, where within a mile or so, you have massive, beautiful buildings that are centers of worship for just about every religion, major religion in the world.

And all of them are seeking to bring people to God by certain rituals, by acts of obedience as well. They have recognized that the key to peace in their relationships with one another and with this world is in their relationship with God as they are defining him.

But it's a reminder from the beginning that within humanity, within each of us, there is a need and a desire to be right with God. And that's how Augustine begins his very powerful book called The Confessions with this thought.

And I want to read it to you. It's the very first paragraph of The Confessions. This is a very influential book in Western thinking. And it's wonderful the way it starts. My copy of the translation uses man to describe all of humanity, so don't be put off by that.

[5 : 08] But he starts out by saying this. Man is one of your creations, Lord, and his instinct is to praise you. He bears about him the mark of death, the sign of his own sin, to remind him that you thwart the proud.

But still, since he is part of your creation, he wishes to praise you. The thought of you stirs him so deeply that he cannot be content unless he praises you.

And then this is very familiar. And really, religions are all formed by restless hearts.

They seek to find God and to rest in him and find peace. It is that basic instinct that Augustine prays about here. And it's in everybody, even though, certainly in Vancouver, wealth and materialism can sort of mute that instinct for wanting to find God and be at peace with him.

But wonderfully, these confessions of Augustine are filled with belief and praise of God and his glorious grace in Jesus through the forgiveness of sins.

[6 : 27] So the theme throughout it is that humanity finds its peace in Jesus alone. It is glorious. It saves people. The way that Augustine put it, he prays again in the middle of the confessions, Physician of my soul, he says, You have forgiven my past sins and drawn a veil over them.

And in this way, you have given me happiness in yourself. That quest, that instinct for God is found. There's a completeness, a happiness in the forgiveness of sins.

And that's the good news of Jesus. Romans 5.1 puts it very simply and clearly. It says, Since we have been justified by faith, forgiven and made right with God, reconciled with him, We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We find our rest in him because he is the great high priest. You see, what he does is that Jesus brings people into the presence of the living God.

The thing that every religion is trying to do, Jesus accomplishes. He completes it. And in that way, he actually concludes all religions. And Christianity is not a religion.

[7 : 42] It is, it is, Christianity is a relationship with God because of the completed work of the great priest, Jesus Christ. And he is the priest for the world.

He calls the world and he calls you and I by name to trust him to do that work for you, to bring you to God. This is God's glorious grace.

It is the gift of Jesus. And I want to look briefly at this priestly work in the book of Hebrews. Because, because it helps us to appreciate and glorify God for what he does in Jesus.

So turn to Hebrews 10 on page 1006. And as you're turning there, Hebrews is a big book. And we don't have time to go into all of what it is.

But if you want to, in a sentence, Hebrews is about God's word to man and about man's way to God. Perfectly achieved by Jesus.

[8 : 43] And that was a helpful, a preacher once said that. Very helpful for us. Hebrews is about God's word to man and man's way to God achieved perfectly in Jesus Christ.

And so those two pillars, Jesus being the prophet, God's perfect, final, sufficient word to humanity. And the second pillar is Jesus, our priest. He is the perfect, final work, sufficient work that brings people to God.

That's what the whole arching theme of Hebrews is. And here in chapter 10, there is really focus on the priesthood of Jesus. And it does it through contrast.

And the first contrast is a contrast between the old priesthood and Jesus, our priest of this new relationship, this new covenant. So in verses 1 through 4, one of the big differences is in the power of the sacrifice with regard to sin.

And so verse 1 starts out by saying, The law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities. It can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

[9 : 59] Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered since the worshippers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sin. But in these sacrifices, there is a reminder of sin every year.

For it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. And it's important to know that the high priest alone could enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement once a year.

And that's in the tabernacle and then in the temple as well. So once a year, there would be a solemn ceremony where he would sprinkle the blood of the sin offering. And he prayed and he offered incense and sacrificed for himself as well as for the people.

And every time the priest went through this solemn ceremony, every year, it was brought home to the people that it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

And there was this reminder again and again that the separation between God and humanity was profound. And it remained. So that the sacrifices, as it says here, they don't take away sin.

[11 : 08] They are a ritual or symbolic purifying. It's not a real and effective taking away of sin. That's the old order.

But the amazing thing about the priesthood of Jesus is that he doesn't offer animals as the old priest does. He offers himself. And so if you look back one column just to the left there, chapter 9, verse 11, You see that Christ appears as that high priest of the good things that have come.

And then through the greater and more perfect tent, not made with hands, that is not of this creation. He entered once for all into the holy places. And that's heaven.

Not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by the means of his own blood. The priest gives his blood. Thus securing an eternal redemption. And this is the gift that we have in Jesus Christ.

You go down a little bit further. Verse 14, How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from a dead works to serve the living God?

- [12 : 24] This is the cross that those verses are talking about. As Jesus the priest sheds his blood on the cross, he presents himself an offering to God.
- And that offering purifies everyone near. It takes away sin. It banishes them forever. And it frees us for all time to serve a living God.
- And to enter that perfect tent, not made with, it's not creation. It's actually entering heaven. It's an incredible power of the cross, of that sacrifice, of Jesus' blood being given.
- And it's the reality that the old sacrifice was pointing to. Now there's a second picture of the priesthood. And that's in verses 5 through 10. And that picture is of the obedience of the priest.
- And it's very important because that obedience, which God requires, is given to us as an extraordinary, undeserved gift. So verses 5 through 7 is about Psalm 40.
- [13 : 32] And the psalmist knows in this psalm that God is asking for obedience and not sacrifice. And he desires that, but he knows nobody can do it. And so the writer to Hebrews puts those words in Jesus' mouth.
- Jesus says, verses 5 through 7. And he repeats it above in verse 8. I just want to look at that. When he said above, That's obedience.
- And so he does away with the first, the sacrifices, in order to establish the second, which is obedience, a right relationship with God, a perfect, perfect relationship with the Heavenly Father.
- And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all.
- And you know, that word sanctified is important for us. It means that we, it means forgiven and it means given access to God.
- [14 : 43] So God accomplishes that in his obedience. His obedience to death on the cross. And we understand here that no one can offer that perfect obedience but Jesus.
- And he offers it for us. And therefore that perfect obedience is put into account forever. It's given to us.
- It's exchanged. A powerful exchange happens. He takes our sins into himself. And then he gives to us his obedience.
- He lives the perfect life in our place. And that exchange meets our deepest need. It brings to us peace with God.
- A loving, open relationship with him. In which God calls us his sons and daughters just as he calls Jesus his beloved son. It is the gift of God substituting Jesus, his perfect life for us, for our sake.
- [15 : 48] And then finally, verses 11 through 18. There is a final contrast here. Not only do we hear about how powerful and effective Jesus' sacrifice of blood is.
- Not only do we hear his obedience given to us. But we also hear about this contrast between a daily offering of sacrifice in the old covenant.
- And a once and for all sacrifice of the new covenant. Notice how many times it says once and for all. In verses 11 through 14. Every priest stands daily at his service offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins.
- But when Christ has offered for all times a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. In other words, his work is finished for all time.
- Waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

[16 : 53] You see, where there is such complete forgiveness, there is no need for any more sacrifice. And, you know, this is something that's emphasized in our communion service.

This is what Thomas Cranmer was thinking of here when he wrote those very familiar words to us. He says in the communion service, It's a long sentence, but he wants us to be completely clear.

It was a once and for all forgiveness of sins. A once and for all sacrifice. It is total. It is powerful. It covers sins past, present, and future.

And the wonderful thing about this is that he doesn't just take sin away, but he gives us new hearts as well. So if you keep going down here, we see the Holy Spirit bearing witness, saying in verse 16, This is the covenant which I will make with them.

After those days, declared the Lord, I will put my laws in their hearts, write them on their minds. And then he adds, I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

[18 : 19] This is the free gift of Jesus, who is our high priest. It is the blessing that is forever ours. Jesus offered himself once for all time on the cross.

He sits down at God's right hand and that sacrifice remains powerful forever. That forgiveness of sins is not one blessing among many blessings that God gives to us.

It is the whole blessing of the new covenant. Peace with God. It is the blessing. Because it brings me into relationship with God. And therefore, it brings me into right relationships with those who are around me.

With family, with friends, with co-workers. Even with enemies as well. We forgive because he has loved and forgiven us first. You see, peace with God and peace with one another is what we were made for.

And that is perfectly accomplished in that once and for all sacrifice. So if Jesus is your priest, religion, which is the work of trying to overcome that which separates from God, is completely over.

[19 : 29] And there is a new reality. And it's here. And here's where the application is. Look at verse 19. Therefore, brothers and sisters, here's the good news.

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, that is through his flesh. And since we have a great high priest over the house of God.

You see, we have a great high priest. We have confidence. Because we are in the very presence of God through Jesus Christ. What a wonderful fact.

It is the great, wonderful grace of God here. And we must ask this question. How do we respond? How do we respond to the work of Jesus giving to us our deepest need here?

And the very simple answer is that we trust the high priest. Remember with a prophet, the way we respond is to listen. The way we respond to the priest is to trust him.

[20 : 32] To persevere. To hold on to the one who works to bring us to God. He is the way. So we hang on to him. To bring us to God himself.

Into his presence. And that's why the last part of this passage, which I'm going to end on, is about what we are doing. So there are three lettuces.

Let us. Let us. Let us. And the great thing is, is that he has said here, look, you are all qualified by Jesus' sacrifice for friendship with God.

We confidently come into his presence. Long search is over. And all the barriers are down. And you know, when you look at the temple, it's all about barriers. The Gentiles can't go in certain areas.

Women cannot go in certain areas. Priests cannot go into certain areas. Even the high priests cannot do it. Except for once a year into one area. It's all about keep out.

[21 : 30] Barriers. But Jesus, our priest, has completely opened the way to God through his perfect sacrifice. He brings us home to the right hand of God. And so God says, actively trust.

And trust in this way. As you have faith. And as you have hope. And as you have love. So look at verse 22. Let us hold fast the confession of our...

Oh, sorry. Verse 22. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. With our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and bodies washed with pure water.

Let us draw near to God. And this is what the priesthood of Jesus does. It draws us into his presence. Because we are assured. The things that drives us away from God is that we are accused.

We don't think we are accepted by God. But Jesus, the priest, gives us full assurance. And says, have confidence in that. Have faith in that. Draw near with God.

[22 : 31] Center your life around that priest. In other words. Pray to him. Live for him. Draw near to him. And then secondly, he says, let us hold fast the confession of hope without wavering.

For he who promised is faithful. And I want to say that hope for the Hebrews, I think for us as well, was absolutely critical. They were going through a terrible time of persecution.

And if you remember when we first moved to St. John's here at this site, David preached on Hebrews. And he talked about how people were losing their homes, their places of worship.

How they were losing their freedom. They were thrown into jail. And that they were physically being persecuted. Hope was very, very important. Because in it is an unwavering confidence in the future.

No matter how desperate things are around us. Even though the presence is a disaster. Not only do we have access to God. But we have a future.

[23 : 32] And that controls everything. The way we go through life. It's a hope. It's an anchor that holds you in a storm. But not only that. It doesn't just hold you. It actually motivates you to bless the world in his name.

I saw a really good example of this in a book that I just finished reading this week. That probably most of you have read before. But my son showed me one of the apps on iPod.

And it's about getting books. And the thing that's great about it is that you get free books if they're old enough. And so the classics are often free.

And so I've been reading a number of classics that I probably should have read and never did. And one of the books that I finished this week was called A Tale of Two Cities by Dickens. It's a marvelous book. If you get to read it, it's free.

Pick it up. Read it. But in that book there is a hero. And he looks a lot like a man who has a wife and small child.

[24 : 29] And he's about to be executed by a guillotine in Paris during the French Revolution. It's a time of awful, awful turmoil. And this hero is a flawed character, but he decides to die in this man's place, unbeknownst to the man.

And the night before he works out his plan, and he's going to die the next day, he wanders around the streets of Paris. And he says to himself over and over again the words that he heard at a funeral in his family from John 11.

I am the resurrection of the life, says the Lord. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Those words were over and over again he was repeating that night.

And as he goes to the guillotine to die, that's the last thing that he is saying, are those words. You see, that hope was an anchor for him in this terribly desperate time.

But it also moved him to be ambitious to bless the world, to bless this little family. It is a hope that made him persevere in this incredible act of love in the face of desperate times.

[25 : 43] And you know, Hebrews is telling us that your future is secure in Jesus, our priest, no matter what you are going through.

No matter what trouble you are facing or sickness that you are suffering from. No matter what life throws at you. Hebrews says, meditate on that hope.

And it will change you. It will change your ambition. It will renew you inwardly. It will sustain you and give you life. And then finally, the third great exhortation is verse 24.

And I think this is the response of grace, which is what the priesthood of Jesus is. Verse 24 says, let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

In other words, a life of gratitude. Not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of sin, but encouraging one another and all the more as the day draws near. The day of Jesus.

[26 : 43] You know, love, the acts of love, the acts of kindness, the good works that this is talking about, they are contagious. They stir one another up to do the same thing.

God actually gives us grace as we think about Jesus the priest to, in a sense, be priests to one another. To help one another towards God, which is part of the job that we have one another.

Are we encouraging each other? Are we strengthening one another to draw near to God? To stay close to him? To come to him? We are helping one another to heaven. This is a very important task that we have.

Responsibility. It's why we meet together and do all kinds of things from study the Bible to care for each other, to be together socially. It is to first and foremost help one another towards heaven.

Towards this hope we have in Jesus Christ. May God grant us his Holy Spirit to rejoice in the priesthood of Jesus. To hold fast to him. To persevere in our trust in this great high priest that we have.

[27 : 51] Draw near with confidence. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you. Amen.

We thank you and praise you that he has opened up for us a new and living way, allowing us to draw near in full assurance of faith with cleansed consciences.

For your glory, strengthen us to hold fast our confession and to encourage one another as we await his coming again. Lord, in your mercy.

[29 : 07] We confess that we are prone to falling away, and we all too regularly disobey your commands. We repent of the many times that we have chosen to please ourselves instead of pleasing you, to pursue selfish advantage instead of helping others, or to entrust our future to our own cleverness instead of faithfully depending on you.

Have mercy upon us, God our Father. For the sake of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, forgive us. By your Holy Spirit and for your glory, restore us to the fullness of truth, and guide us in the way of peace.

Lord, in your mercy. Lord, in your mercy. Lord, in your mercy. Lord, in your mercy. We remember the victims of the airline disaster in Pakistan, which took 127 lives this week, and we lift to you the friends and families of those who were lost.

We bring before you the tenuous situation in Syria. We pray for the end to the suffering and conflict, and for the start of a lasting peace.

In these and in the other concerns of our hearts, give strength to the weak, console those who grieve, restore those who are broken, and by your Spirit, draw to yourself all those who are in need.

[30 : 45] Lord, in your mercy. In our prayer. We pray now for our leaders, for the Prime Minister, for the Premier, for the mayors of our cities, and for all who serve in public office.

We pray for the bishops of the Anglican Communion, and for the clergy, ministers, and lay leaders of St. John's. Direct each of them in truth and integrity, according to your perfect will.

By your Spirit, grant that they would fulfill the duties of their offices with honor and with care. Lord, in your mercy. Amen. We pray for our missionaries, Susan Norman, with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and John Strangholt, with Arab World Ministries.

We pray for two Ontario ANIC projects, The Way in Wasaga Beach, and Christ the King Anglican Church in Toronto.

We pray also for the sick and suffering, for Rowena, Susan, Susan, Jean, Janet, Chris, Marguerite, and Brian.

[32 : 12] We remember Sheila Westberg and her family as they mourned the loss last Friday of Sheila's sister. Father, silently in our hearts, we now bring to you the names of the other people in our lives who especially need your care at this time.

we lift them all to you, Heavenly Father, you who knows every deepest need and who satisfies the longing of every heart.

Lord, Lord, in your mercy. Amen. Amen. Keep us in your presence, Heavenly Father, through the days of this week.

cause us to return our thoughts and attention regularly to our great high priest in our homes, in our places of work and study, and as we travel.

make us mindful of opportunities for us to bless and serve others. May the power of Christ transform us and the people who you place in our lives.

[33 : 25] In everything, be glorified forever, Heavenly Father, through your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.