

Ben Libby

Sermon

March 21st, Lent 4

To Jesus Christ who, being found in appearance as a man, humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross, to Him be eternal glory. Amen. Our sermon text this morning is taken from Hebrews, chapter 7, starting at verse 23.

There were many who became priests because death prevented any of them from continuing to remain in office. 24 But because this one endures forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 So for this reason he is able to save forever those who come to God through him, because he always lives to plead on their behalf. 26 This is certainly the kind of high priest we needed: one who is holy, innocent, pure, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices on a daily basis, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. In fact, he sacrificed for sins once and for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who have weaknesses. But the word of the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been brought to his goal forever.

This is the Word of The LORD!!! The congregation may be seated...

Mercy, Grace, and peace are yours through your God and Father, and through His Son, Jesus Christ, true God and Man, dear fellow Sons and Daughters of the King...

How someone addresses you can say quite a bit. It can say something about the one being addressed, or it can say something about the one doing the addressing. For instance, if you call a grown man, "Boy", or "Son", that says that there is a level of disrespect there. On the other hand, if you call a grown man, "Sir" that says that you respect that person, and it also says that you are respectful.

Some people have jobs or roles which change the way you are to address them. A King is to be referred to as, "Your Majesty". A President is to be referred to as, "Mr./Madam President". Any level of Military leader has a rank and title that they are to be known by. A doctor is no longer "Mr./Ms./Mrs.", they are now simply "Doctor".

This also applies to the clergy. Sometimes I can tell what denomination someone belongs to by what they call me. "Pastor Libby" could be a lot of different denominations, ourselves included. "Reverend" is as ambiguous. But if someone calls me "Father", (which I could count on one hand) I would typically think they were part of the Roman Catholic church.

Catholics don't call their clergy "Pastors". They are called "Fathers" and they are known to be "Priests".

They are known as Priests, basically, for what they teach to be going on in the Lord's Supper (Mass to them). A priest is someone who performs a sacrifice. That's why I am not a priest. There is no sacrificing going on in the Lord's supper. The sacrifice has already been made.

We talk about the threefold office of Christ. It states that He is Prophet, Priest, and King. Today we will take a further look into His office as Priest. We will see what that office means for us today. From the text found in Hebrews 7, we see that Jesus is the end and the beginning of the Priesthood. He is our eternal Priest, One who continues to serve us even today. He is the priest that we truly needed, even though we did not deserve Him. And, the Sacrifice that your Priest makes for you also makes you a priest for Him!!! SANCTIFY US BY YOUR TRUTH, YOUR WORD IS TRUTH. AMEN...

What is a priest? Well, it is someone who sacrifices. We often think of a sacrifice as something we give up, but there is more to it Biblically. A priest was a religious official who would make a sacrifice for the sins of the people. That sacrifice was not just giving

something up, rather it involved giving up a life. They would kill an animal and offer it up on an altar for God. They did this to cover up the sins of the people.

The priest would be the one who would go before God for the people. Why did the people need someone else to go before God? This may seem a bit strange to us, but it was vital back then. The people were sinful. Their sin separated them from their God. Thus, they needed a third party to go in between them and the Holy LORD. But no Holy third party existed. You're either holy or sinful. There really is no middle ground. Thus, the priests had to make two sacrifices. One for the priest and one for the people. These priests were familiar with the ways of killing. They had to be, that was the job!

But the priests were not only familiar with death, but they were also subject to it. **There were many who became priests because death prevented any of them from continuing to remain in office.**

To put it bluntly, these priests kept on dying! That was why there were so many of them. An entire tribe of Israel, Levi, was dedicated to the priestly ministry. They were necessary. How else could the people go to God?

It's not that different today. We still need a priest to go to God. The good news is that we don't need to have a physical priest killing an ox, sheep, or pigeon in order to pray to the LORD. Why? Because we have an eternal priest! His name is Jesus! **24 But because this one endures forever, he has a permanent priesthood.**

What is the difference between Christianity and every other religion of the world? Often I ask this question in light of work-righteousness. But there is another difference. A body. Every other religion's founder is dead and buried. Some, like the followers of Muhammed and Budha, mark their burial site, it becomes a shrine to them. But Christianity? We can't view the final resting place of Jesus. Not yet. Sure, we could go to Jerusalem and see the place where it is thought Jesus was buried. But there are no physical remains there. And we know the reason why. He is risen and ascended into heaven. He lives forever.

There are no remains of Jesus on earth because He remains in heaven at the right hand of the Father!

Jesus reigns and remains forever. And because He does so, He also acts as our priest forever! No matter what happens, from now on until Jesus returns, we have a priest in Jesus. He is the opposite of those priests in the Old Testament. There were many of them because they kept on dying. Jesus lives forever and so does His priesthood. He doesn't need to make a sacrifice to go to the Father. But He did make a sacrifice for the sins of the people, His own flesh and blood. Priests were well versed in the ways of killing. Jesus became well acquainted with death as well. He died so that He could pay for our sins. Then, He conquered death and rose from the grave and rose into heaven. Now He is our eternal go-between to the LORD. **For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all (1Ti 2:5-6 NKJ)**

There is not much in this world that remains the same. Everything we have here has a tendency to vanish. Money in the bank? That can vanish quite quickly, sometimes overnight. Friends and family? They too pass away, if we ourselves don't first. Health? One day we can be as healthy as a horse. The next day we can be lying on death's doorstep. Nothing here in this world remains constant. We live in a place that is defined by beginnings and endings. Eventually, all fades. To hold on to something in this world is like trying to hold on to smoke. It all dissolves.

But one thing remains. Faith! Faith in the Lord Jesus. Faith in Him can withstand any type of dissolving. It can outlast anything because of the one who it relies on. As the writer to the Hebrews says later in this book: **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Heb 13:8 NKJ)**

It is because of His permanence that He is able to always save forever! Not only does He save us forever, but He also saves us completely! **25 So for this reason he is able to save forever those who come to God through him, because he always lives to plead on their behalf.** Because Jesus lives forever, it means that we always have an audience

and a priest before God forever!. He always lives to plead on our behalf. This is the kind of priest that we need. We, who change all the time. We, who have situations and circumstances which change all the time. So much can change for us. But what will never change for you is the Priest who died for you. He remained the same yesterday. He remains the same today. He will remain the same tomorrow and forever!

This type of consistency is unlike anything else in our life. And truly it is the kind of consistency we always need! **26 This is certainly the kind of high priest we needed: one who is holy, innocent, pure, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.**

How can we describe Jesus? The best way to do it is to describe the many ways He is not like us. He is holy, we are sinful. He is innocent or without any evil, we are born with evil and live a guilty life. He is pure and undefiled, we are tainted, sin has permeated every fiber of our being. He is separated from sinners, He is consecrated as Holy. We are constantly carrying around this body which is just waiting to die. He is exalted and is in the highest. We are low, lowered by our many sins, and are low down sinners.

And even though He is so different from us, He still delights to be with us and be like us! **Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.(Phi 2:5-7 NKJ)**

He wasn't like us. He is Holy God and we are sinful men. But He took on our flesh and blood so that He could pour it out to save us. He was made like us because that was what it took to save us. To have a priest between God and mankind, it took a third party who could mediate between the two. He had to be someone who was and was not like us. He had to be Holy to commune with God. But He also had to be human-like us so that He could know first hand the struggles we have! Again as this same book points out: **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all**

points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Heb 4:15 NKJ)

Jesus is the Priest we needed, but never the one we deserved. We did not deserve a priest who was all these things: holy, innocent, pure, separated, and exalted. We deserved no priest at all! Our sins should have separated us from God forever! We don't deserve an audience with God. We rebelled against Him and all we really deserve is death and judgment. But this Jesus was the Priest that we NEEDED. We need Him in order to be saved. Because God was willing to give us not what we deserved, and rather what we needed, not only do we have a priest with Him forever, we are also now made to be priests to Him as well!

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" I have to admit, I have always struggled with this question. It was a problem when I was in the first grade, it was a problem when I was a senior in high school, and it remains a problem even to this day. In the first grade, the popular declaration was, "I am going to be a football player." In my senior year, many of my classmates would say something reasonable like, "I am going to be an engineer, or a healthcare professional." Once I graduated from Seminary, my answer that I finally came around to was, "I am going to be a pastor."

But the question always seemed impossible to me. What, I am just going to state what I want to do with the rest of my life? Isn't it unreasonable to make an 18-year-old kid answer something like that? Indeed, it's good to have a sense of direction so you can receive the proper education. But even then, once we get down the path we think we are supposed to go, something can make it incredibly clear that whatever we wanted to be at one point is not going to happen.

As a pastor, when someone calls me "the priest", I usually think that they have some kind of spiritual baggage that needs to be addressed immediately. But at the same time, that title isn't incorrect. Am I a priest? Yes. Are you a priest? Also yes! He has made us kings and priests to God the Father!

There is one job that we all have as Christians. We are made priests. That is, we have been made to be priests by the sacrifice of our eternal Priest Jesus Christ! **27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices on a daily basis, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. In fact, he sacrificed for sins once and for all when he offered himself.**

Jesus' sacrifice is better than any other sacrifice ever. All those dead animals sacrificed in the Old Testament couldn't really do anything to pay for the sins of the people. But that is not to say that God didn't accept those sacrifices. He did. Why? Because they pointed ahead to THE sacrifice of Christ! **And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. 14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. (Heb 10:11-14 NKJ)**

Those old sacrifices had merit because they pointed ahead to the merits of Jesus' sacrifice. But His holy sacrifice was also the end of the priesthood. There was no further need for someone standing before an altar and killing an animal. His sacrificial death took care of that. While Jesus' death was the end of the earthly priesthood, it was the beginning of a spiritual priesthood that we all have been made a part of. **But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1Pe 2:9 NKJ)**

We don't have to grow up first before we become priests of God. We are priests right now. Every time we speak the truth of Christ Crucified, we are acting as priests. We proclaim the glorious light of the good news. Jesus didn't have to make a sacrifice first for His own sins like the other priests had to. He was holy, and that Holy sacrifice is our sacrifice for our sins. He is our priest forever. He has no successors. That is why we don't call our ministers priests. He needs no one to replace Him. He is always in service. But what

He does do is authorize others, both you and me, as priests. We priests don't replace our priest, we merely officiate in His earthly absence. We continue on in the work He started and finished. We just continue to speak the same words He spoke to us! You are a priest because you speak the Gospel which pays for sins!!!

How we address certain people can be telling. It can say something about us. It can say something about who we are addressing. Before Jesus came to earth, we had no right to address the LORD and He had no reason to hear us. But the promise of Jesus was made right after we sinned, and through the promise of that Savior, God would listen to the people. He would accept their sacrifices because they pointed to the Holiest of sacrifices, Jesus, God in human flesh. A lot can change in this life, but that never ever will!

Jesus had to be exactly who He was in order to set this priesthood up. Because He came to this earth, lived a perfect life, and died an innocent death, He abolished the need for human priests forever! What happened when He died on the cross? The temple curtain was split in two. Nothing now separates us from the LORD. We are no longer separated from Him, and we as His priests here on earth can help bring that same reconciliation to others. His sacrifice is sufficient to pay for our multitude of sins. He is the reason we are able to call God our Father! Because Jesus remains our priest forever, He is also our salvation forever! This was His goal for us, and it is completed. Because He is our priest forever, we will be His priest forever as well! All praise and thanks be to Jesus Christ, our eternal Priest, and Sacrifice! AMEN!!!