

Jesus our High Priest
Exodus 28:1-5 Hebrews 9:24-28

For several weeks we have looked at the Tabernacle and how it looks forward to Jesus and his work.

Today we are looking at Jesus' high priestly ministry which applies his redemption to our lives.

If you met a Christian whose life was overwhelmed by sorrow, what is the one thought you might share with them? I want you to think about how helpful the high priestly ministry of Jesus is to us in every situation.

The new Christians in the book of Hebrews were under such pressure they were contemplating turning from Jesus and returning to Judaism. In response, the writer to the Hebrews tells them that Jesus is better than anything the Temple could offer –

7:19 – Jesus provides a better hope than the law

7:22 – Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

9:23 – Jesus is a better sacrifice.

10:34 – Jesus provides a better possession and an abiding one.

11:16 – Jesus is a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

11:35 – Jesus offers a better life

Nothing is better. No one is better. In Jesus, everything is better. This is because, in Christ, substance replaces shadow, reality replaces type and fulfilment replaces promise. What the old system could never accomplish, Jesus, in one fell swoop, has accomplished all at once.

9:26 – But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself

And so the author ends his epistle writing,

13:22 - *I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.*

GR/parakaletō – a paracletic epistle, a ‘comforting work’ – “*Behold the grace and glory of Jesus.*”

We often worry about an application to the various texts we study. In Hebrews, Jesus is the application of the Gospel. Our great need is to see him and what he has done and to trust him and what he has done.

Thus, in these closing verses of chapter 9, the writer focuses on three appearances of Jesus -

26 – He has appeared

24 – He now appears

28 – He will appear

a) *26 - has appeared to put away sin*

Jesus has propitiated and expiated your sin. Nothing else, nothing more could do.

There is no other answer – “*no other sacrifice for sin*” (Hb 10:26).

b) *28 - Jesus will appear, not to bear sins but to save those who eagerly wait for him*

He’s not coming as a judge. Nor is he coming for those who abandon faith. Jesus will one day come and put away every trouble, replacing it with the peace of his presence.

c) *24 - Jesus now appears, in the presence of God on your behalf*

What has Jesus been doing for 2,000 years? His present ministry is to represent you before the Father.

If someone told you that we are saved by Jesus’ prayers, would you say, “Oh no, Jesus saved me by his perfect, single sacrifice at Calvary.” But the writer of 7:25 says that we are saved to the uttermost by the prayers of the risen, ascended, enthroned Jesus.

7:25 – *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.*

What is Jesus doing at this very moment? He is unceasingly praying for you. What does this mean?

First: A Word about the High Priest's Clothing on the Day of Atonement

Use this picture while I describe it.



- a) A linen headdress held a plate of pure gold with the engraved words, "*Holy to YHWH*"
- b) The ephod, or torso garment had 2 shoulder pieces, each holding an onyx stone. The names of the 12 sons of Israel were engraved on those two stones.
- c) The cloth breastplate had four rows, each with three precious stones, each engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel
- d) The breastplate also contained the Urim and the Thummim
- e) The blue robe was worn under the torso garment with imitation pomegranates and alternating golden bells lined in the hem of the robe
- f) The white coat or tunic was of a checkered weave and held by an embroidered sash.

These are called 'the holy garments.' Moses first places them upon Aaron at the consecration of the priests (Leviticus 8:7–9). Aaron wears them until his death, transferring them to his son and successor Eleazar immediately before he dies (Numbers 20:25–28). All successive High Priests are commanded to wear them as well (Exodus 29:30; see Leviticus 21:10).

- a) Headdress – He is approaching God aware of and washed in his holiness
- b) Ephod –He personifies the nation
- c) Breastplate (Urim & Thummim) – The High Priest secures God's judgment on/for the nation
- d) Breastplate – 12 tribes – He wears the nation on his heart
- e) Robe –
- f) All the normal colors,
 - Gold for deity
 - Blue for Heaven
 - Scarlet for sacrifice
 - Purple for royalty

Are associated with the High Priest's garments.

This is how the High Priest approaches God on the Day of Atonement and intercedes for the people. He is bearing the nation on his shoulders and his heart as he takes the blood of that slain animal and sprinkles it 7 times on the mercy seat.

In the Greek NT, 'hiliasterion' is the word for 'mercy seat.'

Luke 9:13 – [The publican cried] *God, be merciful [hilasterion] to me, a sinner!*

How is God merciful to us?

Romans 3:24-25 – [We] are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation [hilasterion] by his blood,

This brings us to Jesus's intercession which is spoken of throughout the book of Hebrews

Second: Let's Look at Jesus's Intercession

7:25 – 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.

How do we understand that intercession?

Romans 8:34 – Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Does Jesus pray like us, "Father, bless..."

Isn't Jesus himself the great blessing and the Father has already given him? Does Jesus need to persuade the Father to bless us after all God has already done for us? After all...

Ephesians 1:4 – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing...

Let me suggest that Jesus's intercession is not so much anything he says as it is simply his presence at the Father's right hand. His nail pierced hands and feet are his intercession.

But we must not measure this intercession by our carnal judgment; for we must not supposed that he humbly supplicates the Father with bended knees and expanded hands; but as he appears continually, as one who died and rose again, and as his death and resurrection stand in the place of eternal intercession, and have the efficacy of a powerful prayer for reconciling and rendering the Father propitious to us, he is justly said to intercede for us.

- John Calvin

Jesus's perfect sacrifice is his intercession. It is not as vocal as it is simply, being the sin atoning, Satan vanquishing presence at the Father's right hand.

No wonder Paul says, "Who is to condemn?"

Third: The Content of Jesus's Intercession John 17

What did Jesus die on the cross to accomplish?

Prior to John 17 Jesus has poured out his life to his people and now he is about to pour out his life for his people. And as the shadow of the cross begins to consume his horizon, he prays, but what does he pray?

a) 15 – Keep them from the evil one.

Jesus knew as only Jesus could know about the great, unseen enemy and warfare.

Luke 22:31-32 - Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.

Our first and principal warfare is "*against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places*" (Eph 6:12).

Every day you are the object of the seduction of a fallen world and the conspiratorial vengeance against the God who thrust Satan from Heaven. Your greatest enemy is not the world or your indwelling sin but the devil himself, the enemy who was bold enough to confront Jesus and encourage him to betray the Father. And yet, on the cross -

Colossians 2:15 – He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Every moment, God beholds the only disfigured body in Heaven and sees in the nail prints of Jesus, the triumph of Jesus over the devil and we are kept from the evil one by that sacrifice..

b) 17 – *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*

Sanctify = set apart. Christ has separated us from the world, from sin and to God. It is done and that is the truth. The truth is that there is a great gulf fixed that no one can cross between us and whatever might damn us.

Every moment, God sees what Jesus has done for you and accepts his sacrifice as whole and complete so there is never any question 'whose side' you are on. Jesus's death has

"delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son..." (Col 1:13).

c) 21 – *that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me*

The last prayer of Jesus is that we will be one so that the world might see that the Father has sent him.

Can the world agree on anything?

In that kind of world, the church is people from all cultures, backgrounds, etc, united in confessing that "Jesus is Lord."

III – When Augustine was being reviled by other church leaders, his secretary, Alypius wanted to respond in kind. But Augustine said, *"Brother Alypius, remember, we are washed in the same blood."*

Our fundamental identity is not something we go looking for and find. Our identity is found in what Jesus has done. We are his blood washed; blood bought people.

And every day, God sees you as his child because he sees you in what Christ has done.

Fourth: For Whom Does Jesus Intercede?

7:25 – Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him...

Those who have drawn near to God.

Remember, it is not your faith that takes you to Heaven. It is your faith in Jesus that takes you to Heaven.

*"My hope is built on nothing less
That Jesus' blood and righteousness."*

All our hope is '*extra nos*,' outside of ourselves, not in us or in the church, but focused on '*crux probat omnia*,' 'the cross is the test of everything.' (Luther).

We ask, "How do I know I'm saved?" But the more important and real question is, "How does God know I'm saved?" A crucified, risen, exalted Jesus sits at his right hand.

The devil wants you to look at you. God wants you to look at Jesus.

He is our salvation.

Conclusion: Jesus is the Tabernacle. He is the Great High Priest. He is the Gospel. He is the good news. And he is at the right hand of the Father, his presence interceding for you.

Community Groups

- 1 – Read Ex 28:1-5 & Hb 9:24-28
- 2 – What did the High Priest wear on the Day of Atonement and how does it point to Jesus?
- 3 – According to Hb 9:26, what did Jesus's first appearance accomplish?
- 4 – According to Hb 9:28, what will Jesus's second appearance accomplish?
- 5 – According to Hb 9:24, where does Jesus now appear and why?
- 6 – Read Hb 7:25. How does Jesus's intercession save us to the "uttermost?"
- 7 – Read Calvin's explanation of Jesus's intercession and discuss it.
- 8 – Then read Ro 8:34 and answer the question, "Who is to condemn?"
- 9 – What does Jesus pray for us in John 17:15, 17 & 21. Discuss how these are fulfilled.
- 10 – What does it mean that it isn't our faith but our faith in Jesus that takes us to Heaven?
- 11 – Why does the devil want us to look at ourselves or our faith for our assurance?
- 12 – Why does God want us to look to Jesus for our assurance?

Daily Devotion

Mon, Dec 18th. Read Ex 28:1-5. Everything God does, he does for a reason. How does the colors of the High Priest's garments look forward to Jesus? Gold – He is pure man yet pure God, wholly perfect. Blue – He's God's Son. Red – He is the perfect, ultimate sacrifice. Purple – Though once dead, he is the ever-living, King of kings and Lord of lords. Think about those colors, like a wordless book, tell the story of Jesus from birth to exaltation. Which of those colors most appeals to you today? Think on Jesus as that, pure, God's Son, sacrifice or King and meditate on that throughout the day.

Tues, Dec 19th. Read Hb 9:24a. The Tabernacle was a “copy of a true thing” but only Aaron’s sons ministered there, not Jesus. Where, according to vs 24, does Jesus minister? No High Priest ever entered there. Christ is ‘better’ than the Aaronic priesthood. He lives forever. His sacrifice is perfect. His intercession is constant. Are you troubled by your sin? Are you troubled by life’s difficulties? What does Jesus in Heaven say about those things? When you are troubled or tormented by those things today, look to Jesus, “in heaven itself” and contemplate what his presence there means for your heartache.

Wed, Dec 20th. Read Hb 9:24b. Why is Jesus in Heaven? For you...“to appear...on your behalf.” His presence secures your salvation. Now, read Ro 8:34 and answer that question. If Jesus ‘died – more, was raised and is now at the right hand of God...interceding’ who can condemn you? Perhaps your parents, siblings, friends or those who didn’t like you have done so for various things or at certain times. But, according to this verse, what is Christ’s thought toward you? Now read, Eph 1:4. Can you count his goodness toward you as more valuable than the evil of others? Think on his love toward you today.

Thurs, Dec 21st. Read Jn 17:15-21. What has Jesus prayed for in vs 15, 17 & 21? You are kept from Satan. You are sanctified in his cross. You are one with the body. Are you taking advantage of that ‘body life?’ Are you attending church regularly? Are you in a small group? Are you leaning on and leaning into the body of Christ for support, encouragement, and love? And, are you supporting, encouraging and loving others? In some way, do both today. Ask and give to someone in the body of Christ.

Fri, Dec 22nd. Read Hb 7:25. For whom is Christ interceding and who does he save to the uttermost? Have you drawn near to God through him? Remember, the emphasis isn’t on your “drawing” but “through him.” Your “drawing” may be strong one day and weak the next. You may doubt your “drawing.” But the emphasis is “Him.” He is able to save, not your drawing. He saves to the uttermost, not your drawing. Use this link to celebrate Christ’s sacrificial intercession in this song and then, sing throughout the day - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEgEa3EtwJg>