

Twenty-Third Sunday After Pentecost – October 27, 2018
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Hebrews 5:1-10 (NIV)

Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. (2) **He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray,** since he himself is subject to weakness. (3) This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. (4) And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was. (5) In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." (6) And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." (7) During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. (8) Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered (9) and, once made perfect, **he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him** (10) and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Friends in Christ,

A couple of years ago Wayfair, an on-line retailer made a commercial featuring some of their own employees as they promoted their company as having everything you need for your home. Perhaps you may recall having seen it. (*Play commercial*) Long before the age of the internet and on-line companies, the inspired writer of the letter to the Hebrews pointed us to Jesus and proved He's just the one we need.

We have heard a number of readings from the Book of Hebrews in our worship services recently. These lessons all have had a common theme of pointing out that Jesus is superior to everything that was a part of the worship life of the Jews in the Old Testament times. This book reveals to us that each aspect of the worship life of the Old Testament believer pointed them to Jesus as just the one they needed because he is the one who fulfilled everything promised by those worship practices. He is the promised one who would provide salvation for all because He is superior to the angels and to Moses through whom the OT worship regulations, ceremonies, and sacrifices had been given. He is superior to Aaron and the Old Testament High Priests.

Theme: Jesus - He's just the one we need!

1. To continually represent us before God (vs. 1)
2. To deal gently with us when we ignorantly go astray (vss. 2-3)
3. Because he was designated by God to become the source of our salvation (vss. 4-10)

This text gives us some insights into the office and work of the Old Testament High priests as it portrays Jesus as the Greatest High Priest of all and the only High Priest that we need. It is my prayer that as we examine this lesson that we will not only grow in our understanding and appreciation of our need for a High Priest but that we will grow in our faith in Jesus as the High Priest that we need.

The opening verse of our text for today explains that we need someone to represent us in matters related to God. **Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God ...** The reason we need someone to represent us before God is because our sins have separated us from God. We needed someone to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins who was selected and appointed to represent us.

In the Old Testament times, God chose the High Priest to serve in this function. Leviticus 16 gives us a detailed explanation of how God wanted the High Priest to represent the people. Here are a few highlights. 1) God made it clear that he would set the time when the priest could enter the Holy Place of the Temple for sacrifice. Before Aaron or one of the priests could enter the Holy Place he had to bathe himself and put on sacred garments. An offering of a young bull and a ram would be needed. The bull was offered as a sin offering for Aaron and his family to put them in an acceptable relationship with God. Two goats were selected from among the people and presented to the Lord. One would become an offering for sin of the people, the other would be “the scape goat.”

The Lord described an elaborate purification process for everything associated with the worship area ... “because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites.” The sprinkling of blood was a significant part of these ceremonies. When Aaron was finished with all of these ceremonies he was to take the “scape goat” and place the sins of the Israelites on it by confessing their sins over it. The goat would then be sent off into the wilderness symbolizing the sending away of our sin. After all of this Aaron would remove his sacred clothing and offer up the ram for himself and the people. These rituals were performed annually on the Day of Atonement. The Lord himself explained what this all meant. “... **on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins.**” (Leviticus 16:30 NIV).

There are two points I wanted to stress by sharing this information. 1) God is serious about the fact that our sins separate us from him. 2) These rituals inadequate and provided no lasting solution to sin – they needed to be repeated over and over again. Now let’s compare this to the offerings and sacrifice that Jesus made.

Like Aaron and the other High Priests, Jesus was appointed by God as our representative to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. But, **unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.** (Hebrews 7:27 NIV) **We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** (Hebrews 10:10 NIV)

Jesus - He’s just the one we need!

1. To continually represent us before God with his “once for all sacrifice.”

Because the Old Testament High Priest was chosen from among men, he would be able to relate to those who had fallen into sin through ignorance or carelessness. He had the same weaknesses and could understand how they could yield to temptation and fall into sin. The same things had happened to him so he could deal with them gently.

Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. (2) He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. (3) This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

Jesus is just the one we need to deal gently with us when we ignorantly go astray. Hebrews 4:15 assures us **we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet he did not sin.** (NIV) Unlike the OT high priests Jesus was sinless – he had no sin of his own. The Apostle Peter describes Jesus as a lamb without blemish or defect who redeemed us with his precious blood. (cf. 1 Peter 1:18-19)

Because Jesus faced the temptations of Satan and lived in our sinful world, he understands the challenges we face. But even more importantly he resisted those challenges for us – he was without sin and offers his sinless life to God for us.

Mercy and compassion is ours because of the perfect sacrifice of Christ! Jesus is just the one we need because deals gently with us when we ignorantly go astray. The gentle dealings of Jesus teach us to be gentle and compassionate with others when they stray into sin and are trapped by it. Jesus never tolerated or condoned sin but he did not deal with the sinner harshly either. He expressed his mercy and compassion to them. Because we understand the value of this mercy and compassion as well as the gentle dealings and forgiven of our Savior, we will desire to respond to sinners in the very same way – assuring them that Jesus is the one they need because he was designated by God to become the source of salvation for sinners.

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. (8) Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered (9) and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

When we hear these words, we might think of Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane on the night he was betrayed. Jesus praying with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death. As his arrest drew near, Jesus was feeling the horrible weight of the world's sins. He was feeling the dread of his approaching death. So, he prayed asking that the will of God might be done.

As this section continues, the author says, **“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered.”** The author is emphasizing Jesus' identity as the Son of God and pointing out that although Jesus is the Son of God, **“he learned obedience from what he suffered.”** That's the way it is with us, isn't it? We learn obedience through suffering. Maybe the suffering comes from a parent who disciplines us for our disobedience and we learn obedience that way. Or maybe we pay some other price for our disobedience and learn the hard way that obedience is a better course. But since Jesus is the Son of God, we might think that he doesn't need to learn obedience. Maybe he should just be given credit for obedience. But God the Father didn't permit his Son any exemption from demonstrating what obedience in the face of suffering means. Jesus suffered poverty, pressure, and persecution. Jesus had close friends deny him. He was denied justice by religious and secular authorities. Jesus suffered sorrow and ultimately he suffered death on a cross. But through it all, Jesus was obedient. He did his Father's will. He kept the law of God. Jesus was absolutely obedient -- he is the source of our salvation.

As a result, of Jesus active and passive obedience our eternal salvation has been earned. There is nothing left to be done – no more offerings or sacrifices – there's nothing we can add to what he has done for us. Jesus is everything we need! Forgiveness for our sins and eternal life in heaven is God's gift to us on the basis of Jesus's saving work. Faith secures these wonderful blessings for us – this is the obedience that our text has in mind when it assures us **he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.**

Dear friends God has provided us with a real High Priest who was obedient for us, who sacrificed for us, who understands our needs and cares for us, who deals gently with us and assures us of our eternal salvation.

Theme: Jesus - He's just the one we need!

1. To continually represent us before God
- 2 To deal gently with us when we ignorantly go astray
3. Because he was designated by God to become the source of our salvation

Amen.