

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Twentieth Sunday after Trinity, October 13, 2013

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 341, 240:4, 220, 360, 360:7

Lessons: Exodus 28:40-43, 1 Peter 1:17-25, John 12:23-33.

Sermon Text: Hebrews 7:24-27.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ, our only High Priest, Fellow Redeemed:

Do you know what it is to feel frustrated? Everybody answers: yes, sometimes I try so hard to accomplish something, but it just doesn't turn out right. I try again and again, but it just doesn't seem to work out. That's the way it is in this sinful world. Because of sin there is always imperfection.

If we feel frustrated often in earthly matters, think of how much more frustrated we ought to feel when it comes to making atonement for our sins. Then we have to confess with the poet:

"I know that, though in doing good
I spend my life, I never could
Atone for all I've done....

(The Lutheran Hymnal 379:4)

We want to do what is pleasing to God according to the new man in us, but the old Adam always spoils our best efforts. It's like Jesus told His disciples when they kept falling asleep in Gethsemane: "*The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*" (Matthew 26:41 NASB) Every Christian has to confess with Paul: "*When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.*" (Romans 7:21)

If heaven depended on what we are able to do ourselves, we would never be saved. That's why we should really feel happy for the teaching in our text. Let us learn about:

JESUS OUR HIGH PRIEST - PERFECTION PERSONIFIED.

- 1. We have a perfectly holy High Priest;**
- 2. He made a perfect sacrifice as our High Priest;**
- 3. He can intercede for us sinners and so save us completely.**

We speak of Jesus Christ as Perfection Personified. That is, in Jesus' person as the God-Man there is absolute perfection. Our text says: "*Such a high priest meets our need - one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*" In the Old Testament times the Lord established a priesthood to offer up ceremonial sacrifices. Aaron was the first high priest. Many different sinful men served in the office of priest and high priest. Many sacrifices were offered up, but the sacrifices could not atone for man's sin. This book of Hebrews says: "*Those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*" (Hebrews 10:4) What those Old Testament priests did, then, never fulfilled the needs of sinful mankind. But in Jesus Christ we have a high priest who truly meets our need.

He meets our need because He is not sinful like we are. He is "*holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners.*" Jesus has absolute personal holiness. He did not inherit any sin, for He is the Son of God from eternity. When He was to be born as a man, the angel spoke of Him as "*the holy one.*" (Luke 1:35) The Apostle John writes of Jesus: "*You know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.*" (1 John 3:5) Jesus also never committed any sin. He was absolutely without any fault in all that He said, or did, or thought. There was no one who could blame Jesus. He could ask His enemies: "*Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?*" (John 8:46) Pontius Pilate, after hearing all the false accusations of the Jewish leaders, said: "*I*

find no basis for a charge against him." (John 18:38) The penitent criminal on the cross said of Jesus: *"This man has done nothing wrong."* (Luke 23:41) Even though Jesus was tempted by Satan, He did not fall into sin. The Bible says: *"We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin."* (Hebrews 4:15) Jesus was and is still today a true Man, but *"set apart from sinners."* And now that He has perfectly accomplished the will of His heavenly Father in redeeming us, He is *"exalted above the heavens."* Paul writes: *"God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:9-11)

Because Jesus is absolutely holy, He could make a perfect sacrifice as our High Priest.

2.

Our text tells us: *"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."* In that priesthood that God established for the Old Testament times, there were many different priests and high priests because this was over a 1,500 year period. Every day, day after day, the priests offered up sacrifices as God commanded. And once every year the high priest made a special sacrifice on what was called the Day of Atonement. The Lord commanded: *"This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites."* (Leviticus 16:34) There was something that distinguished this ceremony from all the daily sacrifices. The high priest on that Day of Atonement was to himself personally offer up a sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. The Lord told Moses: *"Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household."* (Leviticus 16:6)

The point made in our text is that this had to be done because those Old Testament high priests were sinful like the rest of the people. But Jesus, who became our great High Priest, was not sinful. He was holy. He did not have to offer up a sacrifice for Himself. He had no sin to atone for.

That's why our text says: *"Such a high priest meets our need."* He could do something for us that was absolutely necessary, and that no one else could do. He could offer up a sacrifice that once for all would atone for the sins of all people. This is the precious truth our text teaches: *"He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself."*

All through the Old Testament, from the time of Moses until Christ came, a period of about 1,500 years, the Lord trained the people of Israel to look forward to their coming Messiah. It was by the daily sacrifices of the sacrificial animals that God trained them. Think of how many lambs, for example, were offered up! Then, when that Messiah had come and was ready to do His redemptive work, John the Baptist pointed Him out to his followers and told them: *"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29) It was for this reason that Jesus had to be a true man with flesh and blood.

God carried out His plan of salvation for the sinful world in this amazing way, that His Son was not only the High Priest to offer up the sacrifice for sins, but His Son was also the sacrificial Lamb. The book of Hebrews says: *"He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption."* (Hebrews 9:12)

This one sacrifice of Jesus as the Lamb of God was a perfect sacrifice offered by a perfect High Priest, and, therefore, does not ever need to be repeated. Our text says: *"He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself."* The 9th chapter of Hebrews explains this: *"Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."* (Hebrews 9:25-26) That sacrifice on Calvary was perfect, made once for all time, so that no sacrifice, unbloody or otherwise, need ever be offered on any altar. And it was perfect in that it was for all sinners. John writes of Jesus: *"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."* (1 John 2:2)

There is one more way that our text teaches that we have a perfect salvation in Christ. He can intercede for us sinners and so save us completely.

3.

2

Our text says: ***"Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."*** The Old Testament priesthood was not permanent. A man, like Aaron, could serve only so long, because he lived only so long. So all during the 1,500 years of that priesthood there was a continual change of personnel. ***"But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood."***

Because Jesus holds this permanent office of our High Priest, He can save us completely. That is, the salvation He won for us is not lacking in any detail whatever. He lives forever, and therefore is our changeless Savior. The Bible says: ***"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."*** (Hebrews 13:8) This changeless Lord, our great High Priest, is also given the name Advocate, for He, as our text says, "always lives to intercede" for us before His heavenly Father's throne. John explains what that name Advocate means: ***"If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."*** I John 2:1 When Jesus had finished His redemptive work, He ascended to heaven. At God's right hand He rules over all things in heaven and earth, and He also prays for us as our High Priest. The Bible says: ***"He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence."*** (Hebrews 9:24) Jesus is the only One who can do this. The Bible says: ***"There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men."*** (1Timothy 2:5) Jesus says: ***"No one comes to the Father except through me."*** (John 14:6)

We learn, then, that Christ even now is serving all who believe in Him. His present life at the Father's right hand is devoted fully in the interest of saving those who have put their trust in Him. As such believers in Christ, we have to confess that we daily sin much. The devil also points an accusing finger at us trying to condemn us, trying to make us believe our sins are not paid for. But we can confidently say with the Apostle Paul: ***"Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."*** (Romans 8:34) As often as we sin, Jesus pleads before his heavenly Father that we be forgiven for the sake of His high priestly sacrifice on the cross.

Having learned of Jesus as Perfection Personified, as one who in every way is perfect and whose sacrifice for sins was perfect, let us also confess:

“Thee we own a perfect Savior,
Only Source of all that's good.
Every grace and every favor
Comes to us through Jesus' blood.” Amen. (The Lutheran Hymnal 358: 2)

(Reprinted from the Ministry By Mail for March 20, 1983 by M. H. Eibs. Edited by Robert Mehlretter)