

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Twentieth Sunday after Trinity, October 14, 2018**

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

Hymns: 371, 242:2, 220, 364; 1-5, 37:3.

Lessons: Psalm 110, Ephesians 2:1-18, Matthew 23:23-24.

Sermon Text: Hebrews 7:1-28.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Last Sunday you heard at the end of our sermon text that Jesus *“has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”* Hebrews 6:20 (NIV) One theme – perhaps the most important idea of the book of Hebrews – is that Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary is the high priest who paid the final price for sin. Today we see how his priesthood is unique, following in the order of a man named Melchizedek.

Melchizedek was king of Salem and high priest of the most high God, the true God, the God whom Abraham and his descendants worshipped and followed. Today we take another look at

**THE PRIESTHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST**

- 1. Scripture compares Jesus to Melchizedek;**
- 2. But Jesus is even greater than Melchizedek.**

Scripture compares Jesus to Melchizedek. We learn this about Melchizedek: *“Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything.”* Long after Abraham lived, God commanded his people, the descendants of Abraham, to give to God a tithe, a tenth, ten percent, of all they gained: flocks and herds, produce of their land, and all the increase.

Two explanations are given for the meaning of Melchizedek’s name and official position. *“First, his name means ‘king of righteousness’”*. Of his position, we read *“then also, ‘king of Salem’ means ‘king of peace.’”* In this way he was set apart from other men. By the way, Salem was the place later known as Jerusalem.

When we think of Jesus Christ and compare him to this, Jesus was the king of righteousness. Righteousness is a word we often use but may not always remember its meaning. It means goodness, sinlessness, moral perfection. God has righteousness and demands righteousness from us. Jesus Christ was perfect in behavior and words and thought. He lived a perfectly holy, righteous life. And because he did this and rules especially in the hearts of all believers, he gives them his righteousness. Through faith in Christ his righteousness is given to us. We sang about that in our hymn “Jesus thy blood and righteousness, my beauty are, my glorious dress.”

Jesus also gives us peace, for he is the king of peace. He makes peace between man and God. Jesus assures us: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.”* John 14:27 (NIV) Because of Jesus, God is no longer angry with us because of our sins.

Scripture speaks of Melchizedek as *“Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.* He stands in Scripture absolutely alone. No parents are mentioned from whom he might have inherited power and authority, nor could his priestly office have come to him as a descendant of a priestly family. In this he is like the eternal Son of God. Jesus as the eternal Son of God did have a human mother when he came to earth. But his father was not Joseph, as people supposed. As true God, Jesus was, like Melchizedek, *“without beginning of days or end of life.”* Earthly priests

were no longer priests when they died. Another man had to replace them. But not so Jesus. Melchizedek is compared to Jesus also in this way: ***“like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.”***

Melchizedek was greater than the patriarch Abraham, from whom the Jewish nation descended, to whom God’s blessing was entrusted. Yet Melchizedek pronounced his blessing upon Abraham, who possessed the Messianic promises. ***“Just think how great [Melchizedek] was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people--that is, their brothers--even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. .... In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.”*** Levi had not even been born when Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek.

God demanded a tithe from all the Jews, and that would include any Jews living up until the time Jesus completed his work. But the first readers of this book had left the Jewish religion to follow Jesus as the true Savior. Anyone who would encourage people to go back to the Jewish religion would also have realized that included tithing – giving a tenth of everything to the Levites – who were descendants of Aaron.

The perfection that the law demanded included tithing, giving ten percent. But you heard in our Gospel lesson how the tithe became just an outward thing to do, in some cases, even something that became a source of boasting and pride for some Jews – especially Pharisees, who thought that they obeyed the law better than other people.

But Jesus is a greater priest than any of the Levites. Listen to what Scripture tells us about priests. ***“If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come--one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?”*** Notice that word “if”. That makes it clear that perfection could not be attained through the priests descended from Levi and Aaron. So how was mankind to achieve perfection? God gives us this perfection, this righteousness, through faith in Jesus.

Jesus is living. Other priests are dead. Listen: ***“For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.”*** Jesus is a different kind of priest. He is one who didn’t have to atone for his own sins, and he fully atones for the sins of all mankind. Because he didn’t have any. In that way the law was changed. Jesus did not descend from the tribe of Levi. He was descended from the tribe of Judah through his mother Mary, and even through his foster father, Joseph.

This wonderful Priest sacrificed himself and then he conquered death and brought eternal life out of death. In Psalm 110 we read ***“The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’”*** Psalm 110:4 (NIV) Three times in Hebrews previous to this chapter Jesus is compared to Melchizedek, and this psalm is quoted. Jesus is the Son of God who truly took into his divine person the weakness of human flesh and blood and became the Redeemer according to both natures, God and man. All this is included when God testifies, ***“Thou art a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”***

Scripture goes on: ***“And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. For it is declared: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’ The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.”***

Let me use an example. The laws behind that speed limit sign outside on the highway don't make people obey it. It tells them what the law is. God's Law prescribed or demanded perfection as we read in Leviticus 19: ***"Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy."*** Leviticus 19:2 (KJV) But it did not produce it. ***"The law made nothing perfect."*** The law itself is like a signpost. But it is obedience, perfect obedience, which makes one perfect. We cannot produce perfect obedience. But we find that perfect obedience in Jesus Christ. Then we have reference to an oath, to swearing. Last Sunday you heard about how God confirmed what he said with an oath. ***"A better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever."' Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant."***

Jesus was not just a priest while he was living. He is still a priest, in eternity, sitting at the right hand of God in heaven. He is reminding the Father – as if the Father could forget – that he paid the sacrifice of all the sins of all mankind. John assures us: ***"we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."*** 1 John 2:1-2 (NIV)

***"Now there have been many of those [Old Testament] priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but 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. Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 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. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever."***

***"Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood."*** The priests who died were continually being replaced by young men. But Christ, the everlasting Son of God, holds his office of High Priest throughout eternity. Because Christ holds his office of High Priest in this unique and absolute manner, the salvation earned by him is complete in every detail, not lacking in any single way. Every person in the world who turns to Christ for salvation, puts his faith in him as his Mediator, knows him as the sure approach to God. There is no longer any need of priests and sacrifices and ceremonies and special festivals, for he is our Mediator forever. He has opened the way to the eternal love of the Father. This is so certain because Christ lives forever, and his function in his office of High Priest at the present time is to be our Advocate with the Father, to make intercession for us. Just as Christ's life on earth was spent serving men, so he continues to serve us as he rules us in perfect peace. His entire life in heaven is devoted to the end of insuring everlasting salvation for men.

And we have another reason for acknowledging the superiority of Christ's office over that of the Old Testament priests. He was undefiled, uncontaminated, stainless in spite of all contact with the sinful world, without blemish in the midst of men who are full of the blemishes of sin. Separate from sinners, he has finished his work of redemption and been removed from the visible world and made higher than the heavens.

He has been exalted to the right hand of his Father and as both God and man he partakes of all the eternal power and Godhead. Thus our High Priest has carried through this world with its sin an absolute immunity from contagion or stain. He was true God throughout his earthly life.

Jesus Christ, in the work of his office as High Priest, is perfect forever by virtue of his Godhead. The perfectness of the Son was tested in contact with the sinful world and the many temptations which he had to overcome as the representative of mankind. It was confirmed and sealed by his exaltation. Our High Priest, Jesus Christ, in our own flesh and blood, has gloriously stood the test of all the attacks he had to fight by reason of his humiliation, and therefore, in his human nature, has been exalted on high.

Although Jesus is compared to Melchizedek, he is greater than Melchizedek. We have confidence that as the eternal Son of God, he is the one perfect High Priest, whose sacrifice has everlasting value. It is only through Jesus that we are able to ***"draw near to God."***

Believe that and you shall be saved eternally! Amen.