

HEBREWS 5:1-10
The Ideal High Priest

I feel like I need to apologize because if you've only heard the last two weeks of this series then you got some "softball" material and content that was easy to preach. Today it's more like hardball with some nasty curveballs or sliders. The content is tougher, but that's ok because you're able to put on your thinking caps on Sunday morning and follow.

We're going from the questions, "What does God want from me" and "What does God want to give me?" to "Who is the Jesus who is constantly referred to in the Bible?" We think there is a simple answer...Not so fast my friend.



What one word Song Title comes to mind when you see this picture of Topol who played Tevye?
"TRADITION" – FIDDLER on the Roof:

Each person in the family and in the small town has his/her place. At the center is the Rabbi. No one upheld "tradition" like the Rabbi. That story is set in early 1900's but it is a holdover from the OT Jewish tradition that the High Priest was the most important person in the religious and cultural life of the people of Israel.

That was the case until 70 AD when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. When the Jews were dispersed the Rabbi in the local community became the focal point.

Prior to 70 AD there were different groups who assisted in the temple worship and religious practices, such as the Kohathites and Levites. Above all stood the High Priest who represented the people before God, and he existed for the purpose of making atonement on the Day of Atonement. **The hope of the Jewish religion was bound up with the success of the High Priest, but he himself was a sinful man.**

The Jews relied on a high priest to offer sacrifices for their sins. After Jesus' death and resurrection, however, many of his followers worried that no one could offer these sacrifices. Writing to a primarily Jewish audience, the author of Hebrews described Jesus as the great High Priest who can sympathize with all people. His argument is that **by following Christ, they are not leaving a religious practice that had no High Priest; they were engaged with the ultimate Ideal High Priest.** This is foreign sounding to us, but it was VERY important for them.

EX: you can imagine the whispers and comments about forsaking the practice of the people of God since the days of Moses – "What, no High Priest." It's a violation of the societal norms. It's like denying your religion, your culture and your family. The social pressure to return to Judaism would have been great, so the author spends a great deal of time presenting Jesus as the Ideal High Priest.

What does the author of Hebrews say...Chapter 5:1-10

1 For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; 2 he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; 3 and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. 4 And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was. 5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him,

“You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You”;
6 just as He says also in another passage,
“You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”

7 In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, 10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

There’s a lot of odd sounding terms and theology in this passage but please don’t tune out. The truths presented here are foundational for our Christ life.

EX: building a house – down the street a house has been going up. I doubt the builder said, “Guys, don’t worry about the plans or details, just get to work.”

The teaching about who Christ is makes up the plans or blueprint for the Christian life. Along the way there are specific application points, but the “do this or that” sections depend on the teaching sections.

One thing to notice is this, and it may be so obvious that we miss it: **The Bible makes much of Christ. Do we???**

Beginning in chapter 5 and going through chapter 10, Jesus as the Ideal High Priest becomes the focus of the book of Hebrews.

The author is making the point that Jesus doesn’t take the back seat to anyone when it comes to qualifications for High Priest. Jesus exceeds all the qualifications.

There are various ways of grouping the information concerning the High Priest. Lets look at in two main points.

#1 Qualification: the High Priest should share a common humanity with those he represents – v. 1-3

#2 Fulfillment – the ideal High Priest has a divine call that exceeds that of all other High Priests. V. 4-10

The High Priest is called “out of men” to represent men. A bridge builder is needed because of our separation from God. The intimacy with God experienced by Adam and Eve was lost in the Garden. The consequences of this are seen throughout the scripture.

EX: In the OT the people were forbidden to come near to God – Mt. Sinai- Moses had to spend 2 days having the people get clean and ready for God to show up. “Don’t get near the mountain.”

Temple - people could go to the outer court, only the High Priest could enter the holy of holies BUT WITH the death and resurrection of Jesus the veil was torn in two and we are invited to draw near.

NOTE: It is God who initiates a relationship of reconciliation, but we must come to God in a way that He prescribes. The way prescribed in scripture is for the people to come before God via a mediator – a High Priest. As you read the OT you see that the High Priest always came with the blood of a substitutionary victim on his hands. **In the case of Jesus, he is both the offering and the High Priest.** Here is a principle rooted in the religious mind of people everywhere.

NO PRIEST = NO ACCESS

THE GOOD NEWS OF the GOSPEL IS THAT WE HAVE IMMEDIATE ACCESS BECAUSE OF Jesus.

At the heart of a FALSE religion is the idea that we can approach God in a way of our own choosing rather than the way that He prescribes.

** One small indicator of this is the simple statement, "I like to think of God as..... OR "I don't think that God would ever..." even when what we think is clearly contrary to what He has revealed in His Word.

The High Priest was an effective representative because he was one of the people. He knew their struggles. He knew the weaknesses of humanity.

v. 2 He is able to deal gently with the ignorant or who have gone astray because he is "clothed" with weakness. Note that the text shows that Though he was a sincere man of spiritual maturity, he knew the reality of sin. Before he could atone for the people, he had to offer a sacrifice for his own sin. He must keep on offering sacrifices because he continues to sin. Because of his own weakness he was kept from being harsh and intolerant.

****APPLICATION: when we find ourselves harsh toward the sins of others it is because we have forgotten our own sins against God. Gentleness is the fruit of shared weakness.**

Scriptural Principle:

THERE IS NO REPRESENTATION WITHOUT PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION

The High Priest could identify with the people; therefore, he could represent them.

If you've been here the past few weeks a question may have popped into your head. "How can Jesus identify with us or be gentle with us when he has never sinned?"

I came across a great perspective on this. It was written by Adolph Saphir in his Commentary on Hebrews

<https://juchre.org/saphir/heb3.htm#chap11>

Let me paraphrase – the fuller quote will be in the notes online.

His argument is that God the Father and Christ the Son keenly discern the sins that we all commit, but when it comes to the SINNER, Jesus, by virtue of his perfect holiness, is gentle and considerate.

But with regard to the SINNER, Jesus, by virtue of His perfect holiness, is the most merciful, compassionate, and considerate Judge.

We who are ourselves sinners tend to be more impatient and severe with regard to the sins of others. Our vanity finds the vanity of others intolerable; our pride finds the pride of others excessive. And again, blind to the guilt of our own peculiar sins, we are shocked with another's sin, different indeed from ours, but not less offensive to God, or pernicious in its tendencies.

Again, the greater the knowledge of divine love and pardon, the stronger faith in the divine mercy and renewing grace, the more hopeful and the more lenient will be our view of sinners.

The Lord Jesus was therefore most compassionate, considerate, lenient, and hopeful in His feelings toward sinners and in His dealings with them. He was infinitely holy and perfectly clear in His hatred and judgment of sin; but He was tender and gracious to the sinner.

Jesus was well aware of the sinful nature and condition of all us. He knew and knows our hearts. We are more shocked at the sin of others than Jesus was, even though he himself never sinned. He expressed more disdain for the religious sins of pride and self-righteousness than he did for the "neon sign" sins that get our attention.

All of that to say that Jesus is a gentler High Priest than any High Priest taken from among men. Of course, the only way to experience that gentle mercy is to come to Him in repentant faith. Jesus is a

real Savior for real sinners. If we say we have no sin, we call God a liar and we won't experience His love and forgiveness found in Christ.

#2 Every High Priest should have a divine appointment to this position v. 4.

He must be called by God, just as Aaron. Only one ordained by God can carry out this role.

EX: OT has examples of men who took on the role without the call of God and it turned out ugly.

Num 16 – Korah; Saul as priest – bad result and lost the monarchy; King Uzziah – struck as leper.

Moving from “Shadow to Substance” – what do we see? (the OT High Priest was the shadow – Jesus the Substance)

Jesus is better than any OT High Priest – the Ideal High Priest has a divine call that exceeds that of all other High Priests. V. 5

The two OT QUOTES show that Christ was a priest forever; order of MELCHIZEDEK.

Quote from Ps 2 – enthronement Psalm used in Heb 1. All that is prefigured in Ps 2 is fulfilled in Jesus. Acts 2- Jesus is the 'greater David'.

The very son of God Himself.

In the first century there was a Dead Sea Essene Jewish community, most likely the one addressed in the letter to the Hebrews.

Among the Essenes there were two themes: **(1) They were very interested in re-establishing a pure priesthood.** They regarded Israel's priesthood at that time, under the control of the Sadducees, as impossibly corrupt and so they had largely withdrawn from the worship of the temple in Jerusalem as a result. They were looking for the day when they would have their own men in control of the Jewish priesthood

(2) They also had the idea of two Messiahs – Royal Messiah, like David, and a priestly Messiah, like Aaron. This was a faulty, but commonly held view. The offices of priest and king were always distinct, so it was hard to imagine them combined. Yet such was the case in the OT history in Melchizedek – two offices in one man- Priest and King.

Jesus has a call, like that of Melchizedek, so his call is greater than that of Aaron – God's own son now reigns as King and High Priest.

SO WHAT?

The manner of approaching God is still by a High Priest, but now it is Jesus. Being a Christian and a protestant doesn't mean that we no longer need a priest. We do, and we have Him – **the Son of God who is our High Priest forever.** That is IDEAL.

He shares a common humanity while remaining sinless.

v. 7 fully God and fully Man. Leave off one or the other, we are in heresy.

- 'loud crying with tears' – Gethsemane and the cross – “my God, my God,...’

Jesus is a man with emotion and passion – this is not apathy, or stoicism or an aloof approach to life.

Fully human as to his flesh and his spirit. “my soul is overwhelmed to the point of death’. Ever felt that way? So did Jesus.

Jesus longed for escape but longed for the will of God even more. The eternal Son of God knows what it is like to have his plea answered with a divine “No”, yet He submitted to it knowing it would lead to his death...and resurrection.

v.8 'he learned obedience' – It sounds odd to speak of Christ learning obedience, but this speaks to his humanity. Go back to Luke 2 – Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. He knows what it is like to grow as a maturing follower of God.

PIPER: “This does not mean he moved from being disobedient to being obedient. It means he moved from being untested to being tested and proven. He moved from obeying without any suffering to obeying through unspeakable suffering.”

Note that Jesus obeyed. Talk of obedience is cheap. It is real obedience that counts. We know we are obeying when it goes against the natural inclination and desire of our humanity. When we choose to obey in those moments, we enter the fellowship of his suffering. There is a cost or a tension to real obedience, otherwise it is simply going along with something you already agree with. Even if you agree with it, if it is hard it is a test of obedience.

We are never more like Jesus than when we choose to obey God when it would make human sense not to.

No one would have blamed Jesus if he had called down a legion of angels to rescue him from the cruel death of the cross. No one really understood what was at stake, but He did, and he held fast to the will of the Father.

It is at the crisis point that obedience is learned and manifested.

** application in Parent/child relationship or any relationship of authority.

The ideal High Priest can come to our aid because he has endured greater suffering and temptation than we can ever imagine.

v. 7 God could have saved Him- his prayer was heard.

Jesus knew that God could save him out of death, i.e. the resurrection.

With obedience complete he becomes the source of salvation for all who obey him. We might expect the author to say, “for all those who believe or have faith in Him.” That sounds better to our ears, but in scripture faith and obedience are connected. Rom 1:5 speaks of the “obedience of faith.” Faith and obedience can be distinguished, but not separated.

The salvation is given to the obedient, but it is not based on their obedience. OUR obedience is not seen as the basis for our right standing with God. That is built only on the obedience of Christ. Jesus is the SOURCE or author of their salvation; obedience is the outcome or the fruit of faith in Christ. It is the proof that our faith is real.

The message is clear – God welcomes sinners as we come to Him in the way that He provides- through Jesus, the Ideal High Priest.

No other way will meet our need, cover our sin, bring forgiveness, and give us access to the throne of grace.

Adolph Saphir

But this compassionate, loving, gentle, all-considerate, and tender regard for the sinner can exist in perfection only in a sinless one. This appears at first sight paradoxical; for we expect the perfect man to be the severest judge. And with regard to sin, this is doubtless true. God chargeth even His angels with folly. He beholds sin where we do not discover it. He setteth our secret sins in the light of His countenance. And Jesus, the Holy One of Israel, like the Father, has eyes like a flame of fire, and discerns everything that is contrary to God's mind and will. But with regard to the sinner, Jesus, by virtue of His perfect holiness, is the most merciful, compassionate, and considerate Judge. For we, not taking a deep and keen view of sin, that central essential evil which exists in all men, and manifests itself in various ways and degrees, are not able to form a just estimate of men's comparative guilt and blameworthiness. Nay, our very sins make us more impatient and severe with regard to the sins of others. Our vanity finds the vanity of others intolerable; our pride finds the pride of others excessive. And again, blind to the guilt of our own peculiar sins, we are shocked with another's sin, different indeed from ours, but not less offensive to God, or pernicious in its tendencies. Again, the purer and higher the character, the quicker its penetration and the livelier its sympathy, discovering and loving any element and tendency heavenward and godward. Again, the greater the knowledge of divine love and pardon, the stronger faith in the divine mercy and renewing grace, the more hopeful and the more lenient will be our view of sinners. And finally, the more we possess of the spirit and heart of the Shepherd, the Physician, the Father, the Brother, the deeper will be our compassion on the ignorant and wayward."

The Lord Jesus was therefore most compassionate, considerate, lenient, hopeful in His feelings toward sinners and in His dealings with them.

He was infinitely holy and perfectly clear in His hatred and judgment of sin; but He was tender and gracious to the sinner.

Beholding the sinful heart in all, estimating sin according to the divine standard, according to its real inward character, and not the human, conventional, and outward measure, Jesus, infinitely holy and sensitive as He was, saw often less to shock and pain Him in the drunkard and profligate than in the respectable, selfish, and ungodly religionists. Again, He had come to heal the sick, to restore the erring, to bring the sinner to repentance. He looked upon sin as the greatest and most fearful evil, but on the sinner as poor, suffering, lost, and helpless. He felt as the Shepherd towards the ignorant and erring, the wayward and foolish, the helpless and perishing; He felt as the Physician towards the guilty and sin-stricken; He felt the yearning of parental love and pity toward the children of Jerusalem; and even on the cross, when their sin appeared in its most fearful intensity, the Lord prayed—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"! (Luke 23:34).

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