

“A Faithful and Merciful High Priest”
(Hebrews 2:17-18)

I. Introduction.

A. Review.

1. If you’ll remember three weeks back we were looking at the three offices the Father bestowed upon Christ as our Redeemer.
 - a. Those offices are: prophet, priest and king.
 - b. He exercised all three in His humiliation, while on earth.
 - c. He continues to exercise them today, after His exaltation.

2. When we looked at His office of prophet, it helped us to understand how Christ fulfills each of them, before He came, when He came and after He came.
 - a. The office of prophet, as well as the prophetic gift itself, was pointing to the prophetic office and work of Christ.
 - b. But even when the prophet prophesied, he did so by the Spirit of Christ.
 - c. In other words, Christ was exercising His office through that prophet as he pointed to His coming and His work of salvation.
 - d. He also came in fulfillment of that office: to fulfill the type.
 - e. When He did, He continued to fulfill His office as prophet by preaching the Gospel and foretelling the progress of the Gospel, after He finished His work and returned to heaven.
 - f. And after His time on earth was over, after He was exalted, He continued to prophesy, both through the apostles and prophets then, and through the preaching of His ministers and the witness of His people today.
 - g. We see through this how Christ exercises each of these offices:
 - (i) His Spirit made the exercise of each office possible in the OT.
 - (ii) Through each of these offices, He was actually pointing to Himself.
 - (iii) He exercised each of them when He came into the world.
 - (iv) And He continues to exercise them after He left the world, again through those who hold the office or have the gifts.

- B. This evening, we’ll want to see this with regard to His office and work as priest.
 1. The priests themselves, in their office and work, were a picture of Christ.
 2. Before Christ came, He was already exercising His priestly office by making the priestly office able to remove sins through His own sacrifice.
 3. When Christ came, He fulfilled that office through His work of intercession and atonement for His people.
 4. And now in heaven, He continues to intercede and apply the merits of His atonement to His people, through the preaching of the Gospel.

II. Sermon.

A. First, the priests and priesthood was a picture of the coming office and work of Christ.

1. They were instituted on the basis of Christ’s work.
 - a. We need to remember that the only reason there was a priesthood in the first place was because there was to be a Christ.
 - b. If God had not intended to send Him, there would be no reconciliation at all.

- c. All everywhere would have been eternally lost.
 - d. God gave His people priests, because He was intending to send the Messiah.
2. But they were also a picture of His coming office and work.
- a. They were responsible to represent the people before God.
 - b. They did this by offering various sacrifices for sin.
 - (i) The author to the Hebrews writes, “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” (Heb. 5:1).
 - (ii) The priest interceded, stood between God and man, to make a sacrifice that would reconcile them.
 - (iii) This is precisely what Christ would do.
- B. Second, like His prophetic work, Christ’s priestly work was being applied through the sacrifices before He came into the world.
1. Sacrifices were instituted as a part of worship after the Fall.
- a. After pronouncing judgment on Adam and Eve, God established sacrifice when He slew the animals and covered their nakedness with their skins (Gen. 3:21).
 - b. Genesis 4 shows us that Adam practiced sacrifices and taught his sons to do so (vv. 3-4).
 - c. Sacrifice continued from Noah to the time of Moses.
 - d. But through Moses, a priesthood was established authorized to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people.
 - e. The Lord said that if these sacrifices were offered according to the Law, their sins would be forgiven.
 - f. We read in Leviticus 4:33-35, “And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and slay it for a sin offering in the place where they slay the burnt offering. And the priest is to take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all *the rest of* its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar. Then he shall remove all its fat, just as the fat of the lamb is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offerings, and the priest shall offer them up in smoke on the altar, on the offerings by fire to the LORD. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him in regard to his sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.”
2. But we need to remember that these sacrifices didn’t have the power to forgive sins in themselves, but only through the work of Christ.
- a. The author to the Hebrews tells us that the blood of bulls and goat could not take away sin. “For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb. 10:1-4).
 - b. The Lord tells us in Leviticus that if sacrifice was made, their sins would be forgiven. But here He tells us that the blood of these bulls and goats could not take away sin. Is this a contradiction?

- c. No. The sin was taken away, but not by the blood of those animals. It was through the blood of Christ that those sacrifices pointed to.
 - d. Paul tells us that God overlooked those sins, because He was looking to the sacrifice of Christ. He writes in Romans 3, “But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (vv. 21-26).
 - e. There was never a sin forgiven but through the blood of Christ. That made the sacrifices effective.
- C. And of course, when Christ came into the world – in His state of humiliation – He fulfilled that office through His prayers and sacrifice.
1. He came to reconcile us to God.
 2. And that is what He did through His intercession on our behalf.
 - a. Christ did so through His prayers, as we see in John 17. Listen to what He prays for us, “While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, *art* in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world” (vv. 12-24).
 - b. And of course, He laid down His life to take away the sins of His people, once and for all, fulfilling all the OT sacrifices. The author to the Hebrews writes, “But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the

flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:11-15).

- D. And now that He is exalted in heaven, He continues His priestly mediation.
1. His continued prayers keep us in the grace of God.
 - a. “Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).
 - b. “My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).
 2. His once for all sacrifice continues to keep us reconciled to God. Again, the author to the Hebrews writes, “By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Heb. 10:10-14).

III. Application.

- A. First, we have a faithful and merciful High Priest. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted” (Heb. 2:17-18).
1. He was made like us in all things, sin excepted.
 2. He became one like us to make atonement for us and to reconcile us to God.
 3. He came in our situation that He might be merciful.
 - a. He has been tempted. He has suffered.
 - b. He knows what we’re going through and how to help us.
- B. Through His sacrifice and prayer, we are reconciled to God and will remain reconciled to Him.
1. His sacrifice has cleansed us and reconciled us.
 2. His intercession will keep us in the grace of God.
 3. The fact that He remains a priest forever means that we will never be lost.
 4. When He comes again, He will not come to exact God’s justice on us, but to take us to Himself. “So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him” (Heb. 9:28). Amen.