

Appointed High Priest Forever Hebrews 5:1-6

Introduction

Our text this morning begins with the word *For*. It provides for us an explanation and expansion of what the preceding verses have said about the high priesthood of Jesus Christ, which will turn out to be a major theme in Hebrews continuing on into chapter 10.

Hebrews actually introduces the theme of Christ as our high priest in Hebrews 2:17-18

17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. **18** For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Last week the theme resurfaced in Hebrews 4:14-16

14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. **16** Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne

of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Let us hold fast (14).

Let us draw near with boldness for help (16).

The reason we hold fast.

The reason we draw near for help.

The reason is a Person: Jesus Christ.

He not only has the qualifications any high priest must have, He is the ultimate high priest for us, far surpassing all that came before or after. No one and nothing else can meet our need and to bring us into fellowship with God the way Jesus does.

¹ For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; ⁶ as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

1. Christ's high priesthood is by God's appointment alone (1, 4, 5).
2. Christ's high priesthood is on behalf of human sinners (1-3).
3. Christ's high priesthood is superior to all other high priests (5-6).

1. Christ's high priesthood is by God's appointment alone (1, 4, 5).

No one but God Himself can establish what it takes to atone for our sins and bring us into fellowship with Him. But for His kindness and grace, we would have no hope.

Salvation/deliverance/healing of our sin plague and the death penalty it brings down on us is something only God can provide. But for His infinite power, we would have no hope.

So a person may go through the motions of some religious ceremony. He may claim to be making us right with God. But only God can authorize that. In the OT, people who tried to usurp the priest's office paid dearly for it.

Korah and his brothers rebelled against Moses and against Aaron and promoted themselves as just as qualified to carry out the high priest's office as Aaron. God's answer: they were swallowed up by the earth, leaving their

smoking censors scattered on the ground. You don't make yourself a high priest before the living God. He must appoint you.

You may recall King Uzziah died the year Isaiah the prophet was called into ministry. He was a powerful and successful king with much righteousness to his credit. But he died a leper. His leprosy broke out on his body the day he tried to usurp the priest's office of offering sacrifices in the temple.

God does not always immediately punish those who take on themselves the priest's office. There are tens of thousands that have exalted themselves to this office deliberately or ignorantly. They carry on the charade that they are actually mediated between man and God. Whole religious cults and elaborate systems, pagan and so-called Christian, have engaged in this behavior for centuries. The false substitutes for the true gospel abound.

But the Scriptural examples tell you what God thinks of such presumption. And whether these pretenders are actually effective in reconciling sinful human beings to a holy God is entirely dependent on whether God accepts the mediator as such.

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relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

⁴ And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by [God].

- Chosen by God
- Appointed by God
- Called by God

Don't miss that providing humanity a way to be forgiven and reconciled matters to God. He alone can make a way for us, and He has done it. Clearly it is priority for Him because from Adam and Eve on He showed human beings the path of atonement through blood sacrifice, to be fulfilled in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, His beloved Son.

What Christ did not do:

- Did not take this honor for himself
- Did not exalt himself to be made High Priest

Notice that the text refers to Jesus as Christ. Remember that is a title, the Messiah, the Anointed One. In the OT, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil, symbolizing God's Spirit poured out on them to empower them for their God-ordained task.

In the first century, many looked for the coming Messiah primarily in His role as King. They were suffering under the domination of the Roman Empire and wanted freedom from it. But the more spiritually perceptive among them longed for more than a political savior. They hungered for deliverance from sin. They understood that their problems were far deeper and more deadly than political, economic, and cultural problems.

If people are made right spiritually, there will be tremendous impact on the political, economic, and cultural problems. But if you pursue fixing these problems without dealing with the sinful heart issues that create them, you spend your efforts in vain. You are distorting reality and will end up with insufficient solutions.

It's great to oppose and try to correct racism, social injustice, abuse, and prejudice, but do so with the power of the gospel to actually change people at a heart level. History is full of efforts to wipe out one kind of sin or another. What people consider great wrong varies with the times and the places. But don't pretend that if you could fix whatever is the favorite whipping boy sin of the day, you've solved humanity's problems. Not even close. *What so often happens is that while we obsess over a certain set of sins, we turn a blind eye to many others, often far worse.*

Meanwhile we bask in our own self-righteousness because we have joined the chorus of voices decrying a certain kind of sin, while the plague continues to do its deadly work in the hearts of us all. *That's the way it is with all false gospels.*

The office of High Priest focuses on the entire sin problem and how to atone for it in order to restore us and all the universe, broken and marred by our sin. God appointed Jesus Christ to serve in this role.

1 Timothy 2:5

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

If you want to find fellowship with the living God, there is a way provided, but only one. Choose any other path, and it will not work. Only what God has appointed will do.

Remember when Jesus healed the paralytic that was lowered through the roof to him because of the crowds? Before Jesus healed him he declared that his sins were forgiven. The Scribes were outraged. They considered His words blasphemy. They rightly said in their hearts, "No one but God can forgive sin." Jesus answered their thoughts.

Matthew 9:5-8

⁵ For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? ⁶ But that you may know that the Son of Man (compare Daniel 7) has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home." ⁷ And he rose and went home. ⁸ When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

What are you looking for to find healing, deliverance, hope, and happiness? You can't find these apart from the God who created you. Jesus alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. (John 14:6)

2. Christ's high priesthood is on behalf of human sinners (1-3).

¹ For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.

Acts on behalf of men in relation to God

- Offers gifts and sacrifices for sins
- Deals gently with the ignorant and wayward

It is for the benefit of human beings that Jesus has taken on this role at the Father's appointment. He expresses the heart of God for a fallen humanity. For people who are weak, ignorant, and wayward. In other words, you and me.

For any high priest to be an effective go-between, he not only had to be appointed by God. He also had to represent human beings, himself a human being suffering the same kinds of shortcomings those he represents have. He could not effectively represent people with whom he was angry and frustrated because of their ignorance and waywardness. He was to deal gently with them, neither sentimental or indifferent, but with forbearance. Especially since he knew himself to be a sinner in need of atonement.

You might think that Jesus could not do this for human beings because of his deity, but don't forget that He is not only fully God; He is fully human, too. But sinless, so He did not need to offer sacrifices for His own sin. How can He represent us then?

Jesus had no sin, but He suffered the effects of sin's curse along with everyone else and even more. He suffered bereavement (his legal father Joseph). A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He suffered the common hardships of laboring for a living as a

carpenter. He knew what it was like to be poor. He suffered the rigors of travel from place to place as an itinerant preacher with no home to sleep in at night. He was often weary. He bore the pain of human suffering in his compassion for the outcast and in his healing of the diseased and broken. He knew all about being misjudged and mistreated by others. He was hated, vilified, mocked, tested. Not just by human instrument of evil, but by the evil one himself, Satan. Jesus knew the demands of crowds pressing in to receive something from him. He understood the conflicts that arise among human beings. He recognized better than anyone else ever the ravages of sin on people's lives, and saw more clearly than anyone the heavy toll disease, demon-possession, and abusive treatment took on their identity, purpose, every part of their lives. He willingly gave Himself up to be mocked, flogged, stripped, crucified, spikes driven through His hands and feet, suffocating and bleeding to death on the cross.

More than anyone else, Jesus understands your sorrows, your struggles, your weaknesses, your sins—everything that beats you down, that frightens you, that spoils life for you. As your High Priest He takes your flaws and failures and fears before God and successfully intercedes for you. If you know for sure that God is with you and that He is

your Ally, He is for you—and all because of Jesus Christ—you can face the worst of life and death bold as a lion. With purpose and resolve and hope and strength and love. If you have Him, you have everything. He will never leave you or forsake you.

The sufferings we endure are largely what we did not choose and would not choose. Jesus chose to suffer and die for us. To do that He had to choose to be us—fully human.

3. Christ's high priesthood is superior to all other high priests (5-6).

⁵ So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; ⁶ as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

The Universal Son-King (Psalm 2:7)

Psalm 2

¹ Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed [Messiah], saying, ³ "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."

⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his

fury, saying, ⁶ “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

⁷ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

The Universal Son-King will deal with all the arrogant rebels, no matter how much power they wield on earth. *No king or president or governor, or congressman, or court justice, or city council, or entertainment idol, or public opinion poll is any match for the King of heaven and earth.* It's completely laughable to redefine what is into what's not, and declare such foolishness the new law of the land. Ridicule and punish the righteous, burn the Bibles, rewrite the textbooks, ban God from the public square, declare sin nothing but a primitive notion to oppress other people, imagine yourself to be what you are not—reality remains. And God still rules. He has established the King of all nations. The

King is God the Son, the Messiah, the Christ.
Jesus.

When you come to Jesus, you come to the King who has been given power over heaven and earth. He is the ruler yet, no matter who tries to trivialize His relevance. That means He actually has full power and wisdom to do whatever needs to be done. You are not praying to a weakling.

But there's more that makes Jesus unique. His kingship is connected to His priesthood. Psalm 2 hints at it in that Jesus invites rebels to repent and find refuge in Him before it is too late. Some kind of atonement has to pave the way for that. But can the King also be a Priest? In the OT sacrificial system, kings were barred from being priests, and priests did not serve as kings. But there is a notable exception that bears the approval of God:

The Forever Priest-King (Melchizedek)

Genesis 14:18

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) **19** And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; **20** and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

So here we have a person who is both king and priest, just as Jesus Christ would be.

Hebrews has much more to say about Melchizedek, but notice that he was king of Salem, the city that would become Jerusalem. David psalmist king would rule there, as will Jesus Christ. The capital city of the universe, the heavenly city, will one day descend to earth. Revelation calls it the new Jerusalem. Heaven and earth will be one.

Psalm 110:1-4

¹ The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." ² The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! ³ Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. ⁴ The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Note how Psalm 110 starts with the ruling power of the Messiah. It is unmistakable. It sounds just like Psalm 2. But then God declares Messiah the king also to be a priest forever.

The Messiah is prophet (Deut. 8), priest, and king. He taught as no one else had ever

taught. He rules over all. He humbly gave himself as the sacrifice for our sin.

Zechariah 6:12-13

¹² And say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. ¹³ It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.'"

No one before or since has fit this description but Jesus Christ, the Savior-King. That is why holding fast to Him matters more than life itself.

And those who follow Him become citizens of his kingdom. He changes their identity and their function in the earth forever. He restores to them what humanity lost in Eden. And He keeps them safe forever.

1 Peter 2:9-10

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's

people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Life is full of twists and turns. Seasons change, and so do we. Elementary school, high school, college, 20s, 30s, 40s, 80s, 90s. Whatever stage of life, whatever part of the journey, He is with you all the days as your High Priest. All the way home, where you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. And he will still be your High Priest through all the eons of eternity. Never a day He abandons you, ever. He is the Universal Son-King, the Forever Priest-King. This life is only the beginning. The best is yet to come. All because of Him.

Conclusion

1. Christ's high priesthood is by God's appointment alone (1, 4, 5).
2. Christ's high priesthood is on behalf of human sinners (1-3).
3. Christ's high priesthood is superior to all other high priests (5-6).

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think it's so important to our ultimate hope of salvation that God has appointed Jesus as our High Priest?
2. Why are efforts to solve humanity's problems apart from Jesus distortions of reality and destined to fail?

3. What are some current and historical examples of such “false gospels”?
4. God appointed Jesus to do His high priestly work on behalf of humans. What does that action tell you about God’s heart toward sinners like you and me?
5. In what ways does it help you to know that Jesus understands better than anyone else your sorrows, struggles, weaknesses, sins, and fears—and then intercedes for you before God the Father?
6. In what ways does knowing the Universal Son-King (Psalm 2) is your High Priest help you come with confidence for help?
7. In what ways does knowing Jesus is the promised Forever Priest-King (order of Melchizedek) give you strength and hope?