

Jesus is Our Great High Priest*Tabernacle*

- Today, on this AW, as we beg season of Lent, as beg 40-day period intense focus on sin & grace, I'd like you pretend, moment, instead church, you've come to the tab. Pretend today you've come to OT tab, place where Israelites worshiped God after left Egypt in Exodus. Did you know: on Mt. Sinai, right after Exodus, after God gave Moses 10 coms, also gave Moses specific instructions for building house of worship, a tent structure called tabernacle. Pretend you're there.
- Pretend fence out in parking lot (extends; gate). Inside fence huge bonfire pit (bigger than dining room table); on top metal grate – altar where animals (bulls, lambs) sacrificed, burned. Every day, morning/night, sacrifices offered to God out in outdoor courtyard of tab.
- Now come to church doors; pretend that's entrance to actual tab structure. But you're not allowed in building. Only priests. Narthex, sanctuary (main part of building): called holy place; where priests prayed, burned incense. Smoke from incense go up to ceiling, like prayers to heaven. But this holy place stopped here, at Communion rail, where big curtain.
- Other side, very special chamber set apart from rest of room (like our chancel area); called MHP, contained ark of covenant. This MHP so sacred that no one allowed back there, except one person, one day year – Day Atonement, most imp Jewish worship festival day of year. On very special Day Atonement, very special person called HP had very special job: go into MHP with bowl of sacrificial blood, sprinkle blood onto ark covenant. This special ritual on Day Atonement would symbolize all sins of people being atoned for (forgiven). That was job of HP.

Great High Priest

- Well, I did say pretend. Not actually at tab; in Luth church. So please don't bring animals to be sacrificed. You're allowed through doors; can come into church. But you won't see pastors sprinkling blood our altar. We don't worship like did in OT. Here's why: because we have Jesus; Jesus is GHP. Jesus has done what no HP could do, and he's fulfilled what their rituals foreshadowed. Jesus GHP.
- That's focus for today and all Weds in Lent. From now until Easter as you come to special Wed services, we'll look at book Hebs, because entire book Hebs is re Jesus as GHP. We want to explore what that means this Lenten season. So as we begin season Lent today, also see Jesus as our GHP.

God's Son

- Book Heb beings, **vs. 1** (basically whole OT). **Vs. 2a**. Jesus is God's Son; and it's through Son, God speaks to us, has relationship with us. Listen how passage describes God's Son.
 - Heir: inherits everything from God; everything belongs to Jesus.
 - Universe: Jesus created world!
 - Radiance of glory: think Transfig few days ago; Jesus radiating God's glory.
 - Exact rep: Jesus isn't just like God; is God; "*G fr G, L fr L, true God fr true God.*"
 - Powerful word: in fact, in Gospel of John, Jesus is called the Word.
- And book Heb says **vs. 2a**. How honored we are that God would choose to speak to us through his own Son! How honored! But must also treat this honor w/ great respect, which not always been done.
- Jesus once told parable: landowner, vineyard, rented to tenants; when harvest time came for landowner collect fruit from vineyard, sent some servants. But tenants, instead of respecting servants, beat up & stoned! So landowner sent more; but happened again. Listen how story goes (Mt 21): **"Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him"** (Mt 21:37-39).

- You understand what Jesus saying there, don't you? God speaks to us through Son, but people don't treat Son with respect. And while Jesus was speaking these words about Pharisees/Jewish leaders who soon would actually kill him, it reminds me: I don't always treat Son with respect either. In fact, even though I didn't order crucifixion or swing the hammer, I've thrown Jesus out, and I've killed him, too. I've nailed Jesus to cross. Every time I sin; every time my heart elevates anything above Jesus; every time I disregard his will for my life, choose my own path – I throw Jesus out, kill him. And so do you. This Lenten season don't forget fact that even though you didn't swing the hammer either, by your sins you've still thrown God's Son out and nailed him to the cross.

Purification

- And yet, it's by that cross that God's Son is also our GHP. **Vs. 3b**; pause there. **“Purification for sins.”** Think back on that HP on Day Atonement. Enters MHP, sprinkles blood on ark; that ritual symbolized “purification for sins.” But still just symbol! Later on Heb: **“Those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. [But] it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (10:3-4).** No sacr can do that, except for sacr of GHP. On GF, when Jesus Christ, sprinkled his blood on cross, the real Day Atonement had come, and Jesus **“provided purification for sins.”** Or as says in 1 Jn: **“The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 Jn 1:7).** That's what was happening on GF when GHP sacrificed not some animal but himself for sins of all people. Keep that horrible, beautiful, powerful imagery on forefront of mind this Lenten season – our GHP sacrificing himself for us.

Interceding

- Just one more thing it says Jesus has done. **Vs. 3b.** Why? Rom 8 tells: **“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” (Rom 8:34).** To intercede means to talk to someone on behalf of someone else. And if Jesus talking to God on our behalf, that means praying for us. The OT priests prayed. In tab, right in front of MHP, burned incense; smoke went up to ceiling like prayers going up to heaven. Jesus is our GHP who sat down at right hand of God to intercede for us, which means Jesus prays for us.

Conclusion

- It's those two thing I teach my 8th gr Cat students to remember about Jesus as our GHP: 1) he sacrificed himself for us on cross and 2) he intercedes or prays for us. This is what makes Jesus our GHP; and this is what we see here. But this is only the beginning. There's so much more to our GHP that the book of Hebs will show us at these Wed services throughout Lenten season.
- May God bless this Lent for us, help us to see Jesus as our GHP.

Hebrews 1:1-3

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.