

Hebrews 5:1-10 – Jesus has gained qualification to represent us to God

Jesus, having suffered and borne our sins, is called into a unique high priestly role

The author compares the high priesthood of Aaron's descendants and Jesus, the ultimate high priest.

1 Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

"From among the people" – the high priest had to know ordinary people to represent them before God.

2-3 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since He himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

"Weakness... his own sins" – the high priest sacrifices first for his own sins, Lev. 16:6,11. By contrast, sinless Christ, Hebrews 4:15; 7:27, exercises a unique and different high priesthood, Psalm 110:4.

4 And no one takes this honour on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

"Called by God" – the Aaronic high priest must not be self-appointed. In Jesus' lifetime the high-priestly office – and the power and control that went with it – belonged to one family who had bought the privilege.

5-6 In the same way, Christ did not take on Himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to Him, "You are My Son; today I have become Your Father." And

IN PRACTICE Jesus, the highest of high priests, who has conquered death, and broken the grip of everything which contends with God's design and purpose for our lives, is the one who takes up our supplication (asking) prayer – and then reminds us that, sharing His exalted place, we should move from asking, to declaring in faith, what He has done. With the great high priest, we can pray with authority – His authority.

QUESTION *What in church or Christian life are we inclined to put our faith in, rather than relying on Jesus to represent us?*

PRAYER Father God, as I come to You in Jesus I am overwhelmed, not just by Your greatness and higher purpose, but by your goodness and generosity beyond anything I could deserve. Help me to hold on to this great truth, for myself and others.

He says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

"You are My Son" – or "Today I reveal You as My Son", Psalm 2:7. A turning point in the comparison.

For further study: read Psalm 2:7-9, Romans 1:4.

"Priest... in the order of Melchizedek" – quoted from Psalm 110:4. This is the first of 10 times this verse is quoted in Hebrews, Ps.110:4,6,10; 6:20; 7:3,11,15,17,21,24,28.

7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission.

"Heard... because of his reverent submission" – Jesus did not shrink from the agony of bearing mankind's sins in a suffering of spirit, soul and body. He asked to be spared the 'cup of suffering', but still went through with it in full obedience.

"Save Him from death" – by resurrection.

8-10 Son though He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered and, once made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

"Learned obedience... once made perfect" – or 'complete, qualified' (teleios lit. 'having reached its end'). Christ was without sin, but proved His humanity by the obedience which finally qualified Him to represent us.

The Living Word

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The Bible readings for Sunday, October 21, 2018, with commentary

Revised Common Lectionary readings for **Sunday, October 21** in Bible order

Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand – read again to reflect on Sunday's teaching

Theme: **God's ways are higher than our ways**

Job 38:1-7 – God's perspective is far higher than Job's opinions

Isaiah 53:4-12 – God's eternal purpose is higher than man can conceive

Mark 10:35-45 – The kingdom of God is a higher order than human status

Hebrews 5:1-10 – Jesus has gained special qualification to represent us to God

Also in this Sunday's readings: Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c

Job 38:1-7 – God's perspective is far higher than Job's opinions

Yahweh announces His presence and cross-examines Job

1 Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm.

"Then the Lord spoke" – Following Elihu's speech, Job 32:6-37:24, the Lord – Yahweh – spoke, first mention since the prologue, Job 1:8; 2:3. Significant because God's covenant name is also His character and His promise, Exodus 34:14-15. "Out of the storm" – God announcing His presence in a covenantal gesture.

2 He said: "Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?"

Job has been complaining from human perspective, showing up his inadequate knowledge of who God is.

3 Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's

foundation? Tell Me, if you understand.

"I will question you... where were you..." – questions to which Job must confess ignorance. God says nothing about Job's suffering but neither does He agree with the counsellors or condemn him.

"Tell Me" – whether rhetorical or demanding a response from Job, he is unable to answer.

5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?

6-7 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone – while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

Hearing from the Lord here, Job 38:1-40:2 and subsequently, 40:6-41:34, bring Job to a better understanding of God's goodness and wisdom, while leaving his earlier questions hanging.

IN PRACTICE We have opinions, and we know that we are right! The problem always being the limited perspective on which we base those opinions. Job, who was entitled to try to work out what was happening to him and defend himself from his friends' well-meaning but flawed attempts to blame him for his downfall, hears from God that He has a higher purpose for His creation including mankind. Who is Job to argue? We take from this two lessons of everyday life, (1) to hold our opinions lightly because God is likely to show how flawed they are, and (2) to always try to see God's higher purpose in the struggles we find ourselves in.

QUESTION *Have you sensed God challenging your opinion and found it unfounded?*

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Isaiah 53:4-12 – God's eternal purpose is higher than man can conceive

The disfigured, suffering servant, a picture of Christ that Isaiah saw

4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted.

"Surely he..." – the servant, introduced in Isaiah 52:13, is appallingly disfigured. "We considered him punished by God" – people conclude he had been struck down by God for his own supposed sins. But something far greater is going on here, Matt. 8:14-17.

5 But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.

"Punishment that brought us peace" – brought us shalom, a huge word, far more than freedom from anxiety. Healing of spirit, the emotional/thinking life of the soul, and physical healing are all part of this divine exchange. This is much quoted as the heart of the gospel. Entry into the life of God's kingdom is not achieved but received through the Servant.

For further study, see Psalm 22:16; Zech. 12:10; Romans 4:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24-25.

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

"Each of us... turned to our own way" – every person has sinned, Romans 3:9, 23, and deserves God's righteous wrath. The servant has taken the consequences and borne the wrath warranted by that sin.

"Laid on Him the iniquity" – recalls the high priest on the Day of Atonement laying hands on the scapegoat and symbolically putting the sins of the people on it.

7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth.

IN PRACTICE The enormity of what God has done for us, having His own Son take the punishment and pay the price in our place, leaves us with gratitude that words are inadequate to express. But what about the knocks of life and the attacks on health and finances and well-being we all face? This punishment that has brought

8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away. Yet who of His generation protested? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was punished.

"By oppression and judgment" – On 'trial' no one spoke up for Jesus; neither did He defend Himself.

9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.

"A grave with the wicked and...rich" – Jesus' cave tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, a rich and righteous man. Isaiah associates the rich with the wicked, because such wealth was often gained by oppression or dishonesty.

10 Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the Lord makes His life an offering for sin, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

"The Lord's will" – at first sight incomprehensible cruelty but "His life [made] an offering for sin" speaks of the Lord's sacrificial love for a lost world.

11 After He has suffered, He will see the light of life and be satisfied; by His knowledge My righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore I will give Him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

"Numbered with the transgressors" – or rebellious ones, identifying with them (with us) and interceding for them to again become servants of the king.

us heavenly *shalom* is a practical remedy for ourselves and for others. When this truth sinks in, it changes the way we pray, from passively asking God to help us, to an active stance of being able to declare in a spirit of praise how He HAS helped us.

QUESTION Praising God for His goodness and deliverance in a difficult situation is challenging. What difficulty can change your prayer for, in the light of this?

Mark 10:35-45 – The kingdom of God is a higher order than human status

The lesson about who Jesus is, and the path to greatness by serving that He shows

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him. "Teacher," they said, "we want You to do for us whatever we ask."

"James and John" – the two others of Jesus' inner circle (following on from Peter's outburst, Mark 8:32-33) still haven't grasped His essential teaching about who He is and His impending death, and what greatness and leadership in the kingdom of God means.

36-37 "What do you want Me to do for you?" He asked. They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

"In Your glory" – the part they had understood is that Jesus was the Messiah; "sit at Your right..." – they associated it, wrongly, with rank and status.

38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?"

"You don't know" – they didn't understand about sharing in Jesus suffering, and the servant nature of leadership in His kingdom.

39-40 "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptised with the baptism I am

baptised with, but to sit at My right or left is not for Me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

"Not for Me" – The Father's authority, not His.

41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

"Indignant" – they wanted prestige and power for themselves. Jesus now spells out what the leadership of God's kingdom entails.

42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

43-44 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

"Not so with you" – the values of the kingdom of God turn the values of the world upside down.

45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

"To serve, and... give His life" – a vital passage in Mark, emphasising how Jesus' death as a suffering servant is central to the values of His kingdom.

IN PRACTICE The Letter to the Ephesians teaches that all Christians, in their new nature, are positionally 'seated' together with Christ, who is Himself seated at the right hand of God the Father with authority over everything. For us this is no less than a place of sharing His spiritual authority in the battle against evil. So there is a sense that we do get what James and John asked for, but not in the way that they imagined. However, the values of the kingdom of God clash with the values of the world, and put serving above status. The point is that, knowing Jesus, personally and intimately, brings a different kind of authority, spiritual authority, which is how Jesus uses us to bring His light and presence into our sin-darkened world.

QUESTION What for you is the hardest part of the "Not so for you" (verse 43)?