

Christ as Priest Third Wednesday in Advent (Midweek 3) December 14, 2005 Text: LSC #125

This year our theme for Advent is *Christ as God/man, Prophet, Priest and King*. This week we will look at Jesus as our Priest. In order to help us with this theme we go back, again, to our catechism and under the question, “For what threefold office was Christ anointed?” we have the answer, “Christ was anointed to be our Prophet, Priest, and King.” This evening we want to look in particular at the second response, that of Christ as our Priest and again the catechism tells us, “As Priest, Christ: 1. fulfilled the Law perfectly in our stead (active obedience); Gal. 4:4-5; 2. sacrificed Himself for our sins (passive obedience); 1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 7:26-27; 1 John 2:2; 3. still pleads for us with His heavenly Father (intercession). 1 John 2:1.”

Again, as we were reminded last week, the promise to send a Savior, a Messiah was made back in the Garden of Eden. Immediately after Adam and Eve fell into sin, God stepped in and promised to take care of the broken relationship between He and His creatures. God promised to send a Savior who would also be a priest. King David wrote in one of his Psalms, “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek’” (Ps. 110:4). Without getting into the question of who was Melchizedek (which would be a sermon or a lecture or a Bible Study by itself) let us just say that this priest appears to be a priest of the Most High God. At any rate, Jesus is promise to be a priest forever after this priestly order.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews tells us, concerning Jesus, “²⁶For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself” (Heb. 7:26-27). Here we are reminded especially of the duties of a priest which were to intercede for the people, that is to pray to God for them and in their stead, as well as to offer sacrifices for the people. And, as we will hear in a moment, this is exactly what Jesus did and continues to do for us today.

This prophecy finds its fulfillment in Jesus in the fact that while He was on this earth Jesus offered prayers for the people. Many times and in many places Jesus is seen in prayer. He is seen in prayer by Himself. He is seen in prayer as the people hear Him praying out loud. He is seen encouraging His own disciples to pray.

Yet, the greatest offering and fulfillment of this prophecy is that Jesus is our High Priest who offers Himself as the sacrifice, once for all for our sins. In Old Testament times, the family would bring a sheep for the sacrifice. The sheep would be without spot or blemish, as perfect a sheep as the family could bring. The priest would slaughter, kill the sheep. He would keep a portion for himself and would offer the rest on the fire as a sacrifice. He would literally bar-be-que the sheep. Then the family would sit down and eat the sacrifice, the bar-be-que, thus participating in the sacrifice. Jesus came, not to offer some other sheep, but to offer Himself as a sacrifice. Because of our sin and because of the cost, the price for our sin, Jesus came into this world. Remember, the price for sin was set in the Garden of Eden. The price for sin was and is, death, eternal spiritual death. Because we cannot pay that price, Jesus came to pay that price for us. Also, because we cannot live as we ought to live, perfectly, Jesus came to live for us as well. Jesus did everything that we are to do, perfectly, for us in our place. Jesus perfectly obeyed all the commandments and perfectly fulfilled all the promises and prophecies concerning the Savior. This is referred to as His active obedience. He actively obeyed all God’s laws and prophecies. Then, He took all our sins upon Himself and offered Himself on the cross as a sacrifice, once and for all, for our sins. This offering of Himself as a sacrifice, allowing Himself to be crucified is referred to as His passive obedience, that is He passively allowed Himself to be crucified on the cross for us, because of His great love for us.

Even today Jesus continues to be our Savior/Priest and not in the sense that He allows Himself to be re-sacrificed, as some would have you believe, every time the Lord's Supper is offered, because as He tells us, His sacrifice on the cross was once and for all. Today, Jesus continues to offer forgiveness of sins through His Word. The Bible is God's Word and it does what it says. When we read God's Word or hear His Word, it does what it says. When God's Word says we are given faith, then we can be sure that we are given faith. When God's Word says we have forgiveness, then we can be sure that is exactly what we have forgiveness of sins.

Jesus also offers forgiveness through Confession and Absolution. When we come to confess our sins, not that we are sorry that we got caught, but that we are sorry that we have sinned, then when we hear those most beautiful words, the most beautiful words in the world, "Your sins are forgiven," then we know that is exactly what we have, forgiveness of sins. Those are indeed the most beautiful words in the world because we know that with forgiveness is also life, life in this world and even better, eternal life in heaven, and salvation.

Jesus offers forgiveness through the Lord's Supper. Remember in the Old Testament, the family would eat of the sacrifice, thus participating in the sacrifice. Today, when we come to the Lord's Table to partake of the Lord's Supper, we are partaking of Christ's body and blood, sacrificed once and for all, not re-sacrificed, for us so that we participate in His sacrifice. That is what it means when we hear Jesus say, "Do this in remembrance of me," that is that we do this, we are given the gifts He has to give through His Holy Supper as we participate in His Holy Supper, eating and drinking His true body and blood, in, with and under the bread and wine. Thus, our participation is such that His life becomes our life, His death becomes our death and His resurrection becomes our resurrection.

Jesus offers forgiveness through the remembering of our Baptism. As we remember our Baptism we are reminded that we are God's children and that we have forgiveness. And yet, not only does our Lord give us forgiveness through all these means, He also strengthens and keeps us in faith through these very means as well, reminding us of the importance of making regular and diligent use of these means.

It is God who does it all, works it all out, makes the promises, fulfills the promises, gives His life, gives us faith, forgiveness, strengthening of faith and eternal life. It is God who gives and we who are given too. And thus, we know we are getting it right and we are being given the gifts when God is doing the doing and we are being done to.

What does this mean? First, God the Father promised it. He promised to send a Savior. And we know that whatever God promises, He brings to completion.

Second, Jesus fulfills it. Jesus is one with the Father and so He fulfills the promises He makes that is He came not only to live for us, to do all that things we are supposed to do but are unable to do, but also to pay the price for our sins, to suffer the eternal spiritual death penalty for us in our place.

And third, the Holy Spirit gives us faith in Him. The work of the Holy Spirit is to motivate us, to stir in us and to work in and through us to live lives of faith, doing the good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do. And they are good works because they are done to His glory.

Thus we see, Jesus is our Messiah and our priest, not only as He came during His life, but also as He continues to come to us and for us today. To Him be the glory for Jesus' sake. Amen.