

Christ as Our Priest

by Roger Ellsworth

Christ's role as priest is to make atonement for our sins, intercede for us, and pronounce blessings upon us, thereby removing the penalty for sin and allowing us to be rightly related to God.

Duration: 32:40

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 5:1-5, Hebrews 7:25-28, Revelation 21:27

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ. He explains that in order to function as a mediator, Jesus had to fill three sub-mediatorial offices: prophet, priest, and king. The speaker emphasizes the importance of Christ as our priest, stating that without him in this role, we would have no hope of heaven. He also highlights the biblical imagery of God's reaction to sin, describing it as repulsive and anger-inducing.

Transcript

Alright, thank you Dan and Wanda and Sylvia for leading us in this time of praise to our Lord. And please find the book of Hebrews. We're going to be looking at three passages from the book of Hebrews.

We're going to begin with chapter 2 and verse 17 and then go to chapter 5 and look at verses 1 through 5 and then chapter 7 and verses 25 through 28. And our theme tonight is a good one, it's Christ our priest, Christ our priest. Now sometimes people draw conclusions about sermons by just looking or hearing the title and it could be that you've already drawn a conclusion about this.

You may be sitting there saying, well I doubt that this could be too interesting, Christ our priest. Well I hope if that's your conclusion that I will prove you to be wrong. I want to tell you that if it were not for Christ functioning as our priest, you and I would have absolutely no hope of heaven at all.

I said to you this morning that the great burning desire of my heart is this, I want to go to heaven when I die. There's nothing more important to me than that. That's the main thing.

As far as I'm concerned, I want to go to heaven when I die. That's the great goal for my life, is to go to heaven when I die. And there'd be no hope for me to go to heaven if it were not for Jesus functioning as my priest.

And that's not just true of me, brothers and sisters in Christ, it's true of you as well. If Jesus had not come and functioned in this capacity as priest, there would be absolutely no hope for us. We would never enter heaven at all.

So if you are interested in heaven, and I think all of you are, then you are bound to be interested in what I have to say to you tonight about Christ as our priest. Now we're continuing tonight, and I'll get to the scriptures here in just a moment, but we're continuing tonight the series that we started several weeks ago on Christian doctrine. And we're looking at the great doctrines of the Christian faith, and we're doing so under the heading, Here We Stand.

And I want this, of course, to be the testimony of every member of Parkview Church. I want us to say, we stand for certain things. We will not budge from these things.

And we have covered several doctrines, and we're in now the very center, as it were, of our faith, because we're dealing with the doctrine of salvation. And we're dealing with this doctrine by fleshing out what I talked to you about a few weeks ago. You remember I had a message for you about Christ as our mediator.

And I don't want to exhaust you, weary you with giving you information that I've already given you, but I do think it's necessary for us to just keep in mind that as our mediator, Christ stepped in between God and man. Christ stepped in between God and sinners to make peace. We talked about that's the role of the mediator.

He comes in between parties in conflict, and he, as it were, lays one hand on this party over here, and he lays this hand on this party over here. And where there has been conflict and alienation, the mediator brings peace. And Christ is identified in scripture as our mediator.

Now, there are a lot of people today who would have you to believe that when we come into this world, we're automatically in a state of peace with God. I tell you, it's not so. The Bible tells us that we are by nature sinners, and because we're sinners, we are by nature at enmity with God.

That means there's hostility between us and God. And for us to be made right with God, for us to have peace with God, there had to be this work of mediation. And the Lord Jesus came to this earth to do this work of mediation.

He came to be the mediator. But as I said a moment ago, we're trying to flesh out this doctrine of the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what I mean by that is this, that in order to function as mediator, Jesus Christ had to fill three other offices.

We might call these, I think I referred to them last Sunday evening, as sub-offices. Here's the main office, mediator. And under that main office, there are these sub-offices.

And I identified three of these sub-mediatorial offices last Sunday evening and gave you some homework. Do you remember the three sub-offices of the mediatorial work of Jesus? Well, there was prophet. We looked at that last Sunday night.

And then tonight we're looking at priest. And then next Sunday night, what are we going to be looking at? King. Yes, prophet, priest, and king.

And Charlie wins the prize because he was the first to say king. He was anticipating. He was ready for me.

And he belted it right out before anybody else could say it. So Charlie, you get the prize tonight, whatever the prize is. Prophet, priest, and king.

And we talked about how that these three words, these three offices used to be very commonly used among God's people. I grew up in a little Baptist church near Vandalia, Illinois, Bethel Baptist Church. That's where I came to know the Lord Jesus.

And I remember us singing songs that used those three terms, prophet, priest, and king. And in fact, we last Sunday evening, as we closed the service, we were able to identify one song, praise him, praise him, that uses those three terms, prophet, priest, and king. And so we are continuing then to talk about the mediation of Christ.

And we're saying that Christ, in order to carry out this work of mediation, had to be our prophet. He had to be our priest and our king. Now, just a little bit more by way of review.

Christ had to serve as our prophet because men and women, listen, can never be at peace with God until they hear the truth of God and they submit to that truth. We last Sunday evening, I think, recall the words of another hymn. The words there to the hymn at Calvary, by God's word at last my sin I learned, then I trembled at the law I'd spurned.

Listen, if you're saved, it's because you heard the word of God. What does Paul say? He says, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. You find that in Romans chapter 10.

And all of that to say that Christ has performed on our behalf, the office of prophet. What's the job of the prophet? The prophet is to declare the truth of God and you could not have been saved had Christ not served as prophet, had he not declared to you the truth of almighty God. Now we're ready to add another brick here to the stack, as it were, and I'm going tonight to say that we could not have been saved.

In fact, I've already said this. If Christ had not also performed the work of priest. And we find him identified as priest here in these three passages.

Look please at Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 17. And I don't want to scare you. No, we're not going to have time to delve into all of these verses in detail.

I'm just primarily interested in the fact that Christ is identified as our priest in these verses. Hebrews 2 and verse 17. Therefore in all things he, that is Jesus, had to be made like his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.

We are going to delve into this a little bit to make propitiation for the sins of the people. You see though that Christ is identified as priest there in Hebrews 2 17. Now look at chapter 5 and verses 1 through 5. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people so also for himself to offer sacrifices for sins and no man takes this honor to himself but he who is called by God just as Aaron was. Now look at this.

So also Christ did not glorify himself to become high priest but it was he who said to him you are my son today I have begotten you. And now Hebrews chapter 7 and we're looking at verses 25 through 28. Hebrews chapter 7 verses 25 through 28.

Therefore he is able he is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them. And look at this. For such a high priest was fitting for us who is holy harmless undefiled separate from sinners and has become higher than the heavens who does not need daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifices first for his own sins and then for the people's.

For this he did once for all when he offered up himself. Now you know that the office of priest was a prominent office in the Old Testament. In fact these three offices that I'm talking about in reference to the Lord Jesus were all prominent in the Old Testament.

You know that there were many prophets in the Old Testament and those prophets ladies and gentlemen were all intended to picture and to anticipate the Lord Jesus in his prophetic office. And there were also many priests in the Old Testament. We have Aaron identified here in these verses I read a moment ago.

And Aaron was the first one to be the high priest of the nation of Israel. But there were many priests after Aaron. And I tell you that the priests of the Old Testament were designed by God to do the very same thing that the prophets were designed to do.

The prophets were intended to anticipate the Lord Jesus in his prophetic office. And the priests of the Old Testament were intended to anticipate the Lord Jesus in his priestly office. Now the priest in the Old Testament the high priest had essentially three responsibilities.

The first responsibility was to make atonement for the sins of the people. The second responsibility was to intercede for the people. Intercede on behalf of the people.

To come before God on their behalf and to intercede for them. To ask God's blessings upon them. And finally the high priest was also responsible to pronounce God's blessings upon the people.

So those were the three main functions of the priest in the Old Testament. Now the Lord Jesus, ladies and gentlemen, also does these three things. The Lord Jesus is the one who makes atonement or made atonement for the sins of his people.

The Lord Jesus now is at the right hand of God to make intercession for all who believe. And the Lord Jesus, aren't you glad for this, pronounces blessings upon his people. But we tonight want to focus, well I shouldn't include you with me I guess, I want to focus on just one part of the work of the priest in the Old Testament and therefore one part of the work of the Lord Jesus.

And that is to make atonement for the sins of the people. I think that you will appreciate tonight that I'm only going to deal with one of these because it would be a very long sermon indeed if I tried to deal with all three. We could talk about the Lord Jesus making intercession as our high priest.

We could talk about him pronouncing blessings upon his people. But we're going tonight to just focus on the Lord Jesus making atonement for the sins of his people. Now the Lord Jesus did this as our high priest.

He came to make atonement for the sins of people. And the Lord Jesus in making atonement is different than the priest of the Old Testament because the high priest of the Old Testament would offer to God the blood of an animal. And that's how atonement was made.

By the way, the blood that was offered in the Old Testament, the blood of animals, that also was intended to picture the coming Christ. I had the misfortune several years ago of being in a Sunday school class in which the teacher made it very clear that he didn't know very much. And much to my amazement and shock, he began to ridicule the Old Testament sacrificial system.

He talked along these lines. He said, well, those stupid people. He said they went around offering all these animals and spilling all this blood and they just were so stupid and they didn't know anything about.

And he didn't realize, as he should, that God's the one who ordained the sacrifices of the Old Testament. And God ordained all those sacrifices to portray the sacrifice of his son, the Lord Jesus, on the cross of Calvary. And so the Old Testament priest would offer sacrifices, but they'd offer these animal sacrifices.

Now, the Lord Jesus in making atonement for our sins, ladies and gentlemen, was different than the high priest in that he offered himself. And so the Lord Jesus was both the priest who did the offering and also the sacrifice which was offered. But now think with me about this business of the atoning sacrifice that Jesus offered.

Think with me about him functioning as our high priest. Why was it necessary? Why was it necessary? Well, it was necessary, ladies and gentlemen, because of two very large realities. First of all, when we talk about the high priestly work of Jesus, we have to call to mind that the holiness of God.

I want to tell you the basic thing that you need to know about God is that God is holy. Now, that means a couple of things to say that God is holy. For one thing, it means that God himself has never committed a sin.

God is free from sin, completely free from it. God has never thought a wrong thought, he's never said a wrong word, and he's never done a wrong deed. And so this is part of the holiness of God.

And the second part of the holiness of God is that he not only is free from sin himself, but he has this deep, utter aversion, this deep, utter revulsion toward our sins. In other words, I'm telling you that God's holiness is such that it compels him, it requires him to judge sin. And the Lord God cannot simply ignore our sins.

Sometimes you'll see parents who have a child that is disobeying, and the parents, in order to avoid conflict and embarrassment and all of that, will just pretend that the child is not disobeying. Well, God's holiness means that he must judge sin. He can't pretend that our sins do not exist.

If God were to pretend that our sins do not exist, he would compromise himself, he would deny himself. And Paul says in one of his letters to Timothy, I think it's the second letter to Timothy, that God cannot deny himself. The main thing that most people tonight in Jackson do not know about God is that God is holy.

And they're going to meet this God. They're going to meet this God. Most people in Jackson tonight are utterly indifferent to the things of God.

Look at these pews tonight. They're not full, are they? And most of the churches are not even open tonight. And churches that are open are in the same condition that Parkview is, with a few exceptions.

The pews are empty, more empty than they are full. What's going on? People are utterly indifferent to the things of God. I've often said that the one scripture that most applies to our situation today is that scripture that says there's no fear of God before their eyes.

There are people tonight all across this city who are glued to their TV sets, they're watching football, or they're out here carousing around in various pleasure spots, and there's no fear of God before their eyes. They're not concerned tonight. They're not out here saying, oh dear, I may have to face God.

I may have to face him before this day is over. They're not saying I may have to face God tomorrow. They're not saying I may have to face God this week or next week.

They're not living that way. There's no fear of God before their eyes. The thing about God that most people do not know, and it's the thing they most need to know, is that God is holy.

He's holy. And that means, as I've already said, he cannot just ignore our sins. That means he's going to call us into judgment someday, and he's going to hold us accountable for our sins.

What an awesome thing that is going to be. And Revelation chapter 6 talks about it. Revelation chapter 6 says that there will finally come a day when people will realize the enormity of this thing of having to stand before God, this holy God, and they will cry for the rocks and the mountains to cover them so they can be hidden from the wrath of the Lamb of God.

But then it'll be too late, won't it? It'll be too late. And most preachers today, that I listen to preachers on the internet, and had the misfortune yesterday of listening to a bad sermon on the internet, and most preachers today have decided to tone down this business about the holiness of God. They won't preach it.

They won't talk about the wrath of God. But the Bible doesn't tone it down. The Bible uses two images to convey to us how God feels about our sins.

The Bible talks about God vomiting. Can you imagine that? God vomiting. In other words, our sins make God sick.

The very sight of our sins is so repulsive to him, so repugnant to him, that the Bible uses this image. It says he vomits at the sight of our sin. And the Bible also uses the imagery of God burning in anger.

Have you ever heard somebody say, well, that just burned me up? Well, the Bible uses that imagery regarding God in relationship to our sins. The Bible says God burns in his anger toward our sins. Now, we must never relinquish, Parkview family, the teaching of the Bible on the love of God.

Oh, thank God. God is love. Where would we be without that? God is love.

But we have allowed the teaching of the Bible on the love of God to blind us to the teaching of the Bible on the holiness of God. And these both are true. We have to hold them together.

God is holy. God is love. Yes, God is holy.

Here's how holy God is. The Bible says that there's nothing that defiles that's going to be allowed to enter into heaven. Nothing sinful, nothing that defiles.

You can read Revelation 21 and verse 27. And one poet put it like this. He said, there is a city bright talking about heaven.

There is a city bright closed are its gates to sin. Nothing that defile, nothing that defile will ever be allowed to enter in. Oh, I tell you, my friends, that the Bible constantly puts before us these two enormous realities, the reality of the holiness of God that causes him to vomit and causes him to burn at the sight of our sin.

And it also puts before us the reality, the reality, the seriousness of our sins. Now you may be saying, well, pastor, what's all this got to do with Christ as our priest? Well, I'm glad you asked because I want to, I want to answer that question. What does this have to do with Christ as our priest? Here's the, here it is in a nutshell.

Here's the nub of it. You and I cannot enter into heaven unless something is done to remove our sins. You and I cannot enter into a right relationship with God unless something is done to remove our sins.

And now we are eyeball to eyeball with the priestly work of Christ. That is, ladies and gentlemen, what the priestly work of Jesus is all about. Jesus came to take our sins out of the way so we can be rightly related to God and so we can enter into heaven at last.

Now there's only one thing, there's only one thing that can take sin out of the way and that is the penalty for sin has to be paid. The penalty for sin has to be paid. I'm telling you that God is a holy God and he has this aversion to sin and God has pronounced judgment upon our sin and that judgment that he has pronounced, we might say it's his wrath, it's eternal separation from God, and because God is a holy God he just can't set that penalty aside.

He can't just set it aside and say well I'm not going to honor that penalty, that sentence. God has pronounced sentence upon our sin and listen, the only way that we can be rightly related to God, the only way we can enter into heaven is for that penalty to be paid. Now when I tell you that Christ came to be our priest, I'm telling you that he came to pay the penalty for our, this is getting good isn't it, it came to pay the penalty for our sins.

I love that word propitiation that we found in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 17 and by the way that is the correct pronunciation, propish, propitiation. It's as if there's a p-i-s-h in the middle of it, propitiation, and that word, that's another word that Baptists used to understand right along with the words prophet, priest, and king, but just as the understanding of those words kind of fizzled out somewhere along the way, unfortunately the understanding of the word propitiation fizzled out along the way. Here's what propitiation means.

It means to appease or to satisfy wrath. I'm telling you that the only way that you and I can have a right relationship with God and the only way that we can enter into heaven and be with God is for God's wrath, God's anger against our sins to be satisfied, God's got to be propitiated, that wrath has to be satisfied, that wrath has to be appeased, that's what propitiation means, to satisfy, to appease wrath. And now we find that the Lord Jesus as our high priest went there to the cross of Calvary, I've already told you this, there on the cross he was both the priest who did the offering and he was the sacrifice that was offered, he offered himself, and he offered himself as the propitiation for our sins.

What it means, brothers and sisters in Christ, is that God poured out while Jesus was hanging on that cross, God poured out his wrath on Jesus. Will you understand me if I tell you that when Jesus was hanging on that cross, the wrath of God burned against him? You're saying, oh it can never be, the wrath of God burned against Jesus? I'm telling you, you had better hope that the wrath of God burned against Jesus, because if it did not burn against Jesus on your behalf, it will burn against you someday. Listen, when Jesus went to that cross and when he was hanging there, the Bible says God made him sin for us.

Oh I tell you, I love to personalize this gospel, God put all the sins of Roger Ellsworth on Jesus, and God's wrath burned against the sins of Roger Ellsworth. They were there on Jesus, and now because God's wrath has burned on Jesus against my sins, I'll never have to endure that wrath myself. Jesus was there in my place, offering himself, the high priest offering himself the sacrifice, so that my sins could be atoned for.

And by the way, that's the reason Jesus cried there on the cross of Calvary. We've gone over this ground several times since I've been here at Parkview. I'm talking about what Jesus said when he cried, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? What was all of that about anyway? Well, the penalty for sin is what? God-forsakenness.

And when Jesus cried that, he was bearing the penalty for my sins. Oh brother in Christ, he was bearing the penalty for your sins. Sister in Christ, he was bearing the penalty for your sins.

In other words, he was enduring the separation from God that your sins deserve and that my sins deserve. I can't begin to take this in, but I can tell you that in some way, Jesus Christ went to hell when he was there on Calvary's cross. The penalty for my sins is hell and eternity in hell.

And try to get hold of this, Jesus there on the cross endured an eternity's worth of hell in my stead, so I won't have to endure that same eternity's worth of hell myself. And again, I come to that question that's so often asked. Somebody will say, well, he was only on that cross a few hours.

How could he endure an eternity's worth of hell? And the answer is this, that he was God in human flesh. He was the God man. And as God, he was an infinite person.

And as an infinite person, he could endure in a finite amount of time an infinite amount of wrath. Now you'll never understand that in this life, and I know I won't either. But what's essential is that we understand this, that when Jesus went there to the cross, he was the high priest offering himself as the sacrifice, offering himself as the propitiation.

And the wrath of God that was streaming toward us fell on Jesus. Can you picture it? Here is God in his holiness, and here we are in our sins, and here's the wrath of God heading toward us. But Jesus there on the cross stepped between us and the wrath, and he absorbed it, and it burned out in him.

And God the Father looked upon that cross, and he said, all I demand is that the penalty for sin be paid, and Jesus has paid it. And so my wrath is satisfied. And we sang this morning, Dan, and it applies equally well tonight.

Those great old words, Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.

If you and I have peace with God tonight, it's because Jesus went to the cross of Calvary as our mediator, went there as our high priest to offer himself as the sacrifice for our sins. And God's people said, let's bow together for prayer. Thank you, Father, for the opportunity, the privilege of going over what should be familiar ground.

Thank you, Father, for the going over what should be glorious ground. Thank you, Father, for the Lord Jesus Christ, our high priest, who offered himself on our behalf. Father, we pray that these things will become even more precious and more real to us in Christ's name.

Amen.

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