

Sermon for Advent Midweek 2

Text: Psalm 110:4

Preached on 12-12-2007

Introduction:

How do you prepare for Christmas? Do you decorate your home? Do you go out Christmas shopping? Do you listen to some Christmas music? I would imagine that most of us do all of these things and more. But think of the challenge God had on His hands as He worked to prepare His Old Testament people for Christmas. There were no manger scenes to display. There were no Christmas songs to play. There wasn't even a word for Christmas. And yet, none of this stopped God from creating among His people a sense of joyful anticipation as they prepared to celebrate an event that wouldn't happen for many more years to come. Rather than zeroing in on the details of Christmas, the LORD used people, places, and events to sketch and foreshadow the great blessings Christmas would bring to the world. That is why we continue concentrating on the fact that...

Series Theme: Christ, the Savior, is Coming...

Today David draws our attention to the Old Testament priesthood and how that office served to point God's people to the one priest who succeeded where all others had failed. That is why we say...

Theme: Christ, the Savior, is Coming as Priest!

Part I: A priest who represents us before God

Part II: A priest who sacrificed Himself for our sins

Part I: A priest who represents us before God

When the world was new, there was no need for priests. Our first parents, created in God's own image, lived in perfect fellowship with God. They walked with Him in the cool of the day. They talked with Him any time they pleased. But then came the sad day when Satan persuaded them to believe they could be happier and more complete by living apart from their Creator. They ended up listening to their tempter and ruining their perfect relationship with the LORD. Of course they realized it immediately. But there was nothing they could do to repair the damage. In fact, that first sin of theirs just kept on multiplying. So with each passing day that sinful couple and all their descendants after them just kept on widening the gap between God and them.

It is truly a wonder that God didn't just wash His hands of our whole sinful race, leaving us all to suffer the eternal torments of Hell. BUT instead God devised a plan to bridge the gap caused by sin. That plan involved the work of a priest who was to serve as a mediator (or go-between) between God and sinful mankind. We find a sketch of God's plan beginning to take shape in the pages of Israel's history. God selected one of Israel's twelve tribes: The tribe of Levi, and from it selected one family: The family of Aaron, to serve as priests. From then on every male descendant of Aaron was to be a mediator. They were anointed to represent the people before God. Day after day priests would go into the temple in order to sacrifice and pray on behalf of God's people. And so the sights and sounds and smells of the temple taught God's people one important truth: The way back to God was through the priests.

Application:

But the Levitical priesthood was only a shadow of what was yet to come into the world. So by itself, the Old Testament Levitical priesthood could not offer sinners the peace with God they so earnestly sought. The writer to the Hebrews says, **“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins” (Hebrews 10:11)**. So what was the point of all this sacrificing? God was preparing His people for Christmas! He was using the Levitical priesthood with its elaborate system of sacrifices to train His people to see how deep their sin went and how desperate their need for a different kind of priest was.

Satan is constantly trying to convince God how deep our sin goes and how hopeless our condition is. His accusations would condemn us too, if it were not for the Father accepting Jesus' sacrifice as a full and sufficient payment for sin. Christ's resurrection on Easter morning was proof of that. With sins paid for, death conquered, and His disciples comforted, Jesus then ascended, returning to His rightful place at His Father's right hand. He now has His Father's full attention. He is interceding on our behalf. So why would God pay attention to what Satan has to say about us? Why would God take his word over Jesus' Word? Every time Satan accuses us in some sin, Jesus is right there. He literally steps between God and us. So instead of seeing the wretched sinners that we are, all God sees are pure, innocent, blood-bought souls. That makes Jesus a priest who represents us before God.

Transition:

Isn't it a joy to live at a time when we no longer have to go see the priest every time we sin? We no longer have to go to the priest because we are waiting for a priest to come to us. Yes, *Christ, the Savior, is Coming!* But He is coming as Priest! The whole reason why Jesus is able to represent us before God is because He first...

Part II: A priest who sacrificed Himself for our sins

Allowing us to eavesdrop on words spoken by God the Father to His eternal Son, David says, **"The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek'" (Psalm 110:4).** Melchizedek is a man who comes up quite mysteriously. We meet him in Genesis chapter 14. After defeating four kings who had invaded his territory and kidnapped his nephew Lot, Abraham gave a tenth of his plunder to the priest of God named Melchizedek. But Melchizedek didn't just serve as priest. He also served as king. This is surprising since in the Old Testament the kingship and priesthood were strictly separated. The kings came from David's family of the tribe of Judah. The priests came from Aaron's family of the tribe of Levi. Melchizedek's extraordinary combination of offices shows that he was no ordinary priest. He was different. He was unique. He was a type of Christ!

Like Melchizedek, Christ received His priesthood by special appointment of God. He was not from the right tribe or family to be a priest. Like Melchizedek, Christ was in a class all by Himself. God had to send Christ as a unique priest, like Melchizedek, because all the sacrifices offered by the Old Testament high priests could never, on the basis of their own worth, free a single person from Hell. They were able to offer forgiveness only because they pointed ahead to a greater, perfect sacrifice. That sacrifice was offered by Christ, the Great High Priest.

Application:

By now you may be wondering what all this has to do with us. We're not a part of Old Testament Israel. We've never been served by it's Levitical priests either. Of what value, therefore, are these Old Testament shadows and types of Christ? They are of great value! They teach us that although we are not part of Old Testament Israel, we still have something in common with the people of Israel. Our sins run just as deep as theirs. Like their sin, ours causes the same enormous gap between God and us. That gap can never be bridged either. Oh, we

may try to patch things up with God. We may offer all kinds of sacrifices to Him in a desperate attempt to win His favor. We promise God that tomorrow we'll clean up our act. We say that we'll no longer use filthy language, have no more angry outbursts, and stop gossiping about people just to name a few things. But these promises end up being short lived.

No matter how hard we work at it, we constantly fall right back into the same old sins we've always done. So if the best of those Old Testament sacrifices offered up by God's Old Testament priests could not set people right with the LORD, then how can our pathetic (not even close in comparison) sacrifices even come close to setting us right with the same LORD? They can't! So if we're going to be freed from a guilty conscience; if we're going to escape the punishment of Hell, then we will need a better sacrifice and a better priest to offer it. The Good News is that we have both in the person of Jesus Christ. As our Great High Priest Jesus did all the things that God requires of us. What is even more amazing about Jesus is that He was not only the priest; He was also the sacrifice. As the perfect Lamb of God, He willingly laid down His own life to, **"Take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)!** That makes Jesus a priest who sacrificed Himself for our sins.

Conclusion:

God's Old Testament people were waiting for a special priest, a priest who would have no connection to Aaron or to the law that made him a priest. We are waiting for the same thing. We are waiting for the birth of the Christ Child. In Him we find a Great High Priest who is to be honored above Aaron and all the priests that followed him. And like Melchizedek, for whom the Scriptures hold no record of birth or death, we are to find in the Christ Child a priest without beginning or end, **"A priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4).** So during this Advent season, as we peer into that manger once again, see more than just a baby lying there. See a Priest: (1) A priest who represents us before God and (2) A priest who sacrificed Himself for our sins. Yes, *Christ, the Savior, is Coming!* But He is coming as Priest! Amen!