

Rev. Seth D Bode + Sermon 288 + Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

"Lord God, You have appointed me as a bishop and pastor in Your Church, but You see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked Your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon Your Word. Use me as Your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all."

"Sir, we would see Jesus."

THE PRIESTHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST

Epistle – Hebrews 5

¹To be sure, every high priest is chosen from the people and is appointed to represent the people in the things pertaining to God, so that he may offer gifts, as well as sacrifices, for sins. ²He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also weak in many ways. ³And for this reason he is obligated to offer sacrifices for his own sins, just as he does for the people.

⁴No one takes this honor on himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵In the same way, Christ did not take the glory of becoming a high priest on himself, but God said to him:

You are my Son.

Today I have begotten you.

⁶He also said the same thing in another place:

You are a priest forever, like Melchizedek.

⁷In the days of his flesh, he offered prayers and pleas with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸Although he was the Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. ⁹After he was brought to his goal, he became the source of eternal salvation for everyone who obeys him, ¹⁰because he was designated by God as a high priest, like Melchizedek.

+ + +

The time I met the smartest teenager in the world...

- What instant doubts would you have if you met the smartest teenager in the world?
- Why do people similarly doubt the authority of Jesus Christ to save?

Take Jesus On Authority

1. The Father authorized Him officially

The high priest was authorized and recognized by God.

- They needed continuous replacement.
- At our best, we need do-overs and repeats.

Jesus was authorized and recognized by God.

- Psalm 2, "You are my Son."
- Psalm 110, "You are a priest in the order of Melchizedek."

2. We can assess Him humanly

Could Jesus "deal gently" with real people?

- There are ways we can connect with Jesus.
- His true-man-ity was needed to save.

Take Jesus.

- We can understand Him enough to believe in Him.
- We can't understand how much it means to Him.

The time I met the smartest teenager in the world, we were all crammed in a small plane. There was another teenager, and the pilot, only the four of us. The pilot turned around and said, "I have bad news, and I have worse news. The bad news is we are going down. The worse news is there are only three parachutes. I have a wife and children, I can't go down with this plane." With that, the pilot grabbed a parachute and hopped out.

We all looked at each other, bewildered. The smartest teenager in the world said to us, "I can't go down with this plane. I might cure cancer or solve the world's economic problems or invent world peace." And he hopped out of the plane, too.

I said to the other teenager, "Well, I know where I'm headed. You're young. Why don't you take the last parachute? I'll stay and pray for all of us." She said to me, "Pastor, don't worry about it. The smartest teenager in the world just jumped out of the plane with my backpack."

- ***What instant doubts would you have if you met the smartest teenager in the world?***

If someone met you and said he was the smartest teenager in the world, you'd instantly have two doubts: 1) Whether anyone else would really say that about this teenager, and 2) whether you'd care to know the person going around just saying he was the best, even if it is true.

- ***People similarly doubt the authority of Jesus Christ to save.***

The reason may be twofold: a) Whether anyone in a position to say so would truly attest to Jesus' salvation, and b) whether you'd care to have the kind of salvation Jesus offers.

Take Jesus On Authority

1. The Father authorized Him officially

Throughout the OT Scriptures, we see the prophets, kings, and priests guilty of failing God. ***The high priest was chosen by God*** as a 'man among men.' To offer 'gifts and sacrifices for sins' could mean especially Leviticus 16, the great Day of Atonement.

The Old Testament priests needed continued replacement because of their mortality. They had to repeat their sacrifices, day after day, year after year. Jesus the eternal Son of God made the "once for all" sacrifice for our sin (Heb. 7:27, 10:10).

At our best, we need do-overs and repeats. This is evidence not just of our sinful world, but also our sinful nature. We are like bad tape-recorders. We just can't get everything right or perfect.

Jesus is recognized. He is ***authorized*** and has the credentials to prove it. Two credentials:

Psalm 2 we discover the reason we call the Son of God the Son of God. "***You are my Son.***" Jesus was not an impostor. He came as God's permanent Son from eternity. This does not mean Jesus had a beginning as the Son of God. It is a statement out of eternity, where there is no beginning and no end. It is a description of the Father's love for Jesus and how pleasing Jesus is to Him. It is a glowing banner of the Father's authorization of Jesus, that this is the right man for the job of salvation.

Psalm 110: was a referral by a new, or rather very old, priestly order. We see a temporariness of the Levitical priesthood already in the New Testament. The great high priest who would fulfill all priestly duties would not be of that Levitical line. Jesus was ***of the order of Melchizedek***, a curious priest-king who led worship with father Abraham in Genesis 14. This was not a priest-king with known origins. Jesus was not following in a succession only to be followed by another successor. He was the great go-between for man and God (1 Tim. 2:5).

Undercover bosses on TV look silly, trying to work the factory line or clean up after the job. Jesus had all the degrees and awards and credentials needed to fill a job. This specific job description especially needed someone just like Jesus. But the job is saving people who suffer much as a consequence of sin. The job was facing what human beings face and for once to come out on top. In the thick of facing what a human being faces, in order to save human beings, did Jesus have the moral fiber? Could He handle the actual experience? Was He only good in theory, or could Jesus be a Savior in practice? For that, His peers must reassess if they would ever take Him on authority.

2. We can assess Him humanly

A good high priest would know his own sin, and so he could “deal gently” with fellow sinners who strayed ignorantly or carelessly. Jesus had no sin. **So could Jesus “deal gently” with real people?**

Ways we could connect with Jesus:

- He offered up prayers and petitions. These were urgent and earnest requests. Jesus knew the value of cutting into the day and saying, “Please help, Lord.” He was stretched to His human limits in finite weakness just like ours.
- He cried out loudly. How many times was Jesus left alone to pray? He did this often. I wonder if the crowds could find Him because of the volume of His prayers all alone. If a tree fell in the woods and no one was around to hear it, no one could tell us how loud it was. But we get an example on the cross with prayers that sound like real challenges to God. “My God, why forsake me?” “Father, forgive them.” There was certainly real human need in those outcries. “I am thirsty.”
- He wept real tears. Jesus didn’t intend to cry. It wasn’t part of His goal here on earth, *per se*. Jesus was wrung out like an old rag for our sins, until tears were wrenched from Him.

His true-man-ity was needed to save. “His undergoing this temptation was not like the easy showing-off of a matter learned by heart, but it was a difficult moral struggle, accompanied by all the pain and torture of temptation” (Hoenecke’s Dogmatics, III.71).

He needed to be under Law and subject to death.

- 1 J 1:7, “The blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all unrighteousness.”
- Php. 2:8, “He became obedient to death, even death on a cross.”

We can understand Him. We can assess Him not because of the high position we are in, as if to judge Him; but we can assess Him based on the pain and discomfort we know. He has felt for you. He understands you. He knows you. He loves you. If you seem to have lost Him, He misses you. ***We can understand that much about Him to believe in Him.***

At the same time, we can’t understand Him. We can’t understand how much He put on the line for us, to forego His authoritative position and pleasure in heaven. We can’t understand how He felt suffering for so much sin. We can’t understand how much joy it has given Him to save us. And ***we can’t understand how much it means to Him,*** that we might take Him by faith.

Take Jesus. It is a “taking-hold-of” only by faith. He has the credentials and the experience. Knowing that, Christian, bring your sin to Him. He has the authority to take it away and forgive you. He has the authority to bring you eternal life and salvation.