**Jesus is Better**

**A Better Priesthood and a Better Hope**

**Hebrew 7:11-19**

**October 20, 2024**

We are in the NT book of Hebrews, continuing our sermon series, Jesus is Better, looking at Hebrews 7:11-19 today, in my message, A Better Priesthood and a Better Hope. In Hebrews seven, the author comes back to Melchizedek to show us something important about Jesus. Our Sunday services are geared to focus our attention Godward. Everything we do, our call to worship, our worship songs, our reading of Scripture, our preaching, open mic, and even our announcements are an attempt to draw our attention Godward. We do this because we have 90 minutes together once a week, a little less than one percent of our time in a week to focus our attention on God. We focus Godward because people who see the greatness and glory found in Jesus, love him and are changed by him (2 Cor 3:18). And the goal of Hebrews is to center our attention on Jesus because people who see the greatness and glory of Jesus don’t not walk away from Jesus. So, let me encourage you to come ready to give one percent of your week to focus your attention Godward.

Last week we saw that the greatness of Melchizedek shows us something about the greatness of Jesus (7:1-10). Today the writer of Hebrews unpacks that theme, showing us how Jesus is superior to the OC priesthood in 7:11-19. The passage has two points, The Inferiority of the Levitical Priesthood (7:11-14) and The Superiority of Christ’s Priesthood (7:15-19).

**1. The Inferiority of the Old Testament Priesthood (7:11-14)**

Hebrews unpacks why the OT priesthood is inferior, it could not attain perfection (7:11). If perfection could be attained through the Levitical priesthood, there would be no need for a new priesthood to arise. But because Old Covenant and the laws pertaining to the priesthood could not attain perfection there was need for a New Covenant priesthood. This new priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek and from the tribe of Judah. And we saw last week that Melchizedek’s priesthood is greater than the OT priesthood and Jesus is like Melchizedek, so his priesthood is greater than the OT priesthood.

What does Hebrews mean by perfection? It is a theme in Hebrews that means to be made acceptable to God (7:18-19; 10:14; 12:22-23). The Old Covenant law and priesthood with the sacrificial system could not make sinful humanity acceptable to God. The priesthood and the laws concerning the priesthood needed to change. From the beginning, the Old Covenant and the priesthood was temporary and pointed to a better priesthood whose single sacrifice for sin would make sinful humanity acceptable to God. In this sense the Old Covenant system of priests and sacrifices was weak and useless to make sinful humanity acceptable to God (7:18; see also Rom 7:12-14; 2 Cor 5:21; Rom 8:1). The Old Covenant system could not reconcile humanity to God, could not save sinful humanity from our sin. But we should not read passages like this and assume that means that the Old Testament has no value for us. That is not the way the NT or church history have thought about the Old Testament. We have spent a lot of time in the OT in the last few years. We love the Old Testament and God's law. There is tremendous value in studying the OT. However, we follow Hebrews in saying, when it comes to saving sinners, the old covenant could not attain to that. So, we read the OT in light of who Jesus is and what he accomplished in the cross. The OT priesthood is inferior because it could not make sinful humanity acceptable to God.

**2. The Superiority of Jesus’ Priesthood (7:15-19)**

Then Hebrews takes another step in his argument, pointing us to the superiority of Jesus’ priesthood. Jesus did not become a priest according to the OT law requiring a priest to be a descendent of the tribe of Levi but by the power of an indestructible or unending life (7:15-16). And this is the parallel Hebrews draws between Melchizedek and Jesus. The writer of Hebrews notices that in Genesis, we never read when Melchizedek dies, and we will never see when the priesthood of Jesus comes to an end because he never dies. Jesus lives forever so his priesthood is an eternal priesthood, going on forever and ever and ever. Then Hebrews quotes Psalm 110:4 (7:17). Speaking of Jesus, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Remember, Melchizedek is greater than the Old Covenant system and Jesus is greater than Melchizedek so, Jesus is greater and better than the Old Covenant system.

Back in Hebrews 6:19, the writer tells us that the fact that Jesus' priesthood goes on forever and ever is a sure and steadfast anchor. Hebrews mentions that back in chapter six pointing to what comes in chapter seven, which is what we see here. The sure and steadfast anchor of your soul is the fact that Jesus’ priesthood goes on forever and ever and ever. You can build your life on that truth. You can stake your eternity on that truth. The Old Testament priests died so had to be replaced and were not capable of doing what Jesus could do. So, Jesus is better.

Then Hebrews summarizes his argument in 7:18-19. When the OT priesthood is set aside, the law must be set aside or annulled because it was weak and useless, it could not perfect anything. This is just another way of saying that the need for a change in the priesthood requires a need for a change in the law. This change introduces a better hope, through Jesus’ death, we draw near to God. We can now draw near to God’s presence directly and confidently, knowing that Jesus atoning death made us acceptable to God, justified before God. The OT priesthood kept Israel away from God, individual Jews dared not draw near to God themselves lest they die. But in Jesus Christ we no do not fear God but draw near to God confidently and joyfully. Only Jesus provides this better hope. And because Jesus’ priesthood is an eternal priesthood, our acceptance with God goes on forever and ever and ever. Salvation is called eternal salvation because it goes on forever and ever. Your salvation is tied to Jesus’ priesthood so your salvation will not be lost because his priesthood never comes to an end. It is an eternal priesthood. This hope Jesus provides is an anchor of your soul.

Hebrews says to us today that if you're tempted to go back to the old system, don't go back because this new system is better, because it's got a better priest. And I want to say to you, I don't know what systems you've come from, what you hoped in, in the past. I don't know what you've previously hoped in for salvation before you trusted Christ. I don't know what you're tempted to go back to because it’s comfortable or because it helps you cope with life. I don't know what your dabbling in or what you previously sold your soul for. I don’t know what has such grip on you that can’t stop. You think it helps you cope with life but in reality, it is only masking your pain and brokenness. You will begin to find freedom when you are convinced that Jesus can heal your sin and brokenness so that you hope in him more than the idols in your life. Don't go back but pay closer attention to Jesus.

**Life Group Questions:**

**Please announce the following in your Life Group:**

The **PFD Drive** is going toward the ministry in Northway, AK to add a classroom for children and a bathroom.

**Harvest Carnival** is October 31. We need lots of candy and lots of help!

If you have **not been baptized**, we are having baptisms November 3, class is October 27.

**Icebreaker:** Say your name and briefly tell us, "“What’s a promise someone made to you, and if they kept it or not. Share the story!”

*Read* ***Hebrews 7:11-19*** *together and ask those questions that you want to ask and as time permits.*

**Head**

1. What do we know about Melchizedek that makes him important in this passage?
2. What is a priest? How does this passage explain the role of Jesus as our high priest?
3. Why do you think Hebrews spends so much time on the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old covenant?
4. Hebrews 7:11 mentions that the Levitical priesthood could not bring perfection. Why do you think the Levitical priesthood (under the Law of Moses) was unable to bring people to spiritual perfection?
5. Why is it significant that Jesus comes from the order of Melchizedek rather than the Levitical line (verse 17)?
6. Verse 19 says, “a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.” What does it mean to have a "better hope" in Christ?

**Heart**

1. How does it feel to know that Jesus intercedes for you as a high priest?
2. How does this better hope affect your personal relationship with God?
3. How do you practically draw near to God now that we have Jesus as our high priest?
4. What barriers, if any, do you face in drawing near to God, and how does this passage encourage you to overcome them?
5. How does the concept of a "better hope" (v. 19) resonate with you in times of spiritual struggle?

**Hand**

1. In what practical ways can you draw near to God this week, knowing that Jesus is your eternal High Priest?
2. How can you share the message of this "better hope" with someone who might be struggling with feeling like they don’t measure up?
3. How can you share the hope we have in Jesus with those around you?
4. Who is someone you can invite to life group?