

12-25-2016

Message: Christ, God's Gift That Keeps On Giving

Text: Hebrews 7:17-28

Introduction

- A. The giving of gifts to one another is one of the ways the birth of Christ is celebrated in our culture.
- B. If you are like me, you appreciate all kinds of gifts - clothing, cards and crafts and candy from our children's Sunday School classes, gift cards to restaurants, my daughter's gourmet strawberry cake, etc.
- C. While we appreciate every gift, did you ever ponder the thought that some gifts keep on giving? Example: soft leather brief case Tony Quillen gave to me 17 years ago that I still overload with commentaries to take home every weekend. As much as I've beaten it up, it still serves me (and you indirectly). It's a gift that keeps on giving.
- D. Yet eventually this and every other material gift in this life will wear away. Yet for believers, God's gift of His Son Whose birth we celebrate today is a gift that is superior to all other gifts, for this gift will keep on giving us access to the presence of God in all His glory throughout all eternity.
- E. There is no more important gift than that gift which enables us to draw near to our Creator. God's Word to us in Hebrews 7 tells us why the gift of His Son is constitutes that unique, supreme gift to our world, separated from God by our rebellion.

I. The gift of God's Son gives us a superior hope of drawing near to God.

Hebrews 7:17 For it is attested *of Him*, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." ¹⁸ For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹ (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand **there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.**

- A. Our sin, our breaking God's law, God's commands, separates us from God, and therefore, from eternal life in the presence of His glory.

Isaiah 59:2 But **your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,** and your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.

Romans 3:23 for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

- B. God, being merciful, taught His people through the symbolism of the Old Covenant ceremonial law that we need a high priest to intercede for us as a mediator to enable us to

draw near to God and survive.

1. Once a year on Yom Kippur, Day of Atonement, this high priest would wear on his breast 12 gem stones representing the 12 tribes of Israel, the people of God, and with the blood of a sacrificial offering, enter the Holy of Holies, representing the very presence of God, to make atonement (covering) for his sins and the sins of the people.
2. But the Old Covenant law of the priesthood was weak (not bad), in that our high priestly representatives kept dying and had to be continually replaced with another. The 1st century Jewish historian and pharisee, Josephus, estimated 83 high priests officiated from Aaron to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 AD (Antiquities 20.227).
3. Further, the Old Covenant command of the priesthood was weak due to the ineffectiveness of the animal sacrifices that the priests offered to God. Such sacrifices were ineffective to remove the guilt of our sins because they were mere symbols of the one, effective future sacrifice God would require for our forgiveness and His honor. The law prohibited the people themselves from entering the holy place.

Hebrews 10:1 For **the Law**, since it **has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things**, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. ...³ But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year.⁴ For **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**. ...¹⁰ By this will **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**.

4. So in Psalm 110, quoted in Hebrews 7, God promised His Son, David's Lord, that He would make Him a king (Messiah) and priest forever. Just as the mysterious priest Melchizedek, to whom Abraham paid tithes in Genesis 14, appears without mention of any end to his priestly ministry symbolizes how Christ's priestly ministry will actually be without end.

Psalm 110:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD (Yahweh) says to my Lord (Adoni): "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."² The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, ...⁴ **The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."**

Mark 12:35 And Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, "How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?"³⁶ "David himself said in the Holy Spirit, 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.'"³⁷ "David himself calls Him 'Lord'; so in what sense is He his son?" And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.

II. The gift of God's Son is superior because His priesthood is guaranteed by God's oath.

Hebrews 7:20 **And inasmuch as it was not without an oath**²¹ (for they indeed became

priests without an oath, but **He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ""**);²² so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

- A. God gives us confidence that Christ's mediation for us as our high priest that gains us access to God will be permanent by swearing by Himself that Christ will be a priest forever, in contrast to the Old Covenant command for a priesthood, a command that could be changed. God's oath will never change.

Hebrews 6:16 For men swear by one greater *than themselves*, and with them an oath *given* as confirmation is an end of every dispute.¹⁷ In the same way **God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,**¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.¹⁹ **This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,**²⁰ **where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.**

- B. Illustration: New roof lifetime guarantee made it attractive. God's oath is superior.

III. The gift of God's Son as our high priest is superior because Jesus lives to make intercession forever.

Hebrews 7:23 The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing,²⁴ but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.²⁵ Therefore **He is able also to save forever** those who draw near to God through Him, **since He always lives to make intercession for them.**

- A. Christ, our high priest, interceded for us on earth with His prayers, death, and resurrection. Intercession is more inclusive than praying alone. It is intervening to provide help - in Christ's case, to bear our sins.

Isaiah 53:11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, **will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.**¹² Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because **He poured out Himself to death,** and was numbered with the transgressors; yet **He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.**

Hebrews 2:17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, **so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**¹⁸ For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, **He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.**

- B. Christ, our high priest, now exalted to the Father's right hand still intercedes for us, providing the help we need to persevere in faith toward Him.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that **we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

- C. Christ, our high priest, for all eternity after His return will still be interceding for us by virtue of His endless life as the once crucified, now risen, reigning God-man and Priest/King! Since our access to God is through our union with Christ, and thus, our union with the benefits of his blood and His justified status, our continual righteous legal standing which enables us to draw near to God will forever be based on our sharing with Christ in His righteous legal standing. It will never be grounded in our own righteousness in eternity any more than it could be in the present. (Umbrella slide - Christ's blood and righteousness is our shield).

Romans 8:33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? **God is the one who justifies;**³⁴ who is the one who condemns? **Christ Jesus** is He who **died**, yes, rather who **was raised**, who **is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.**

- D. Because Christ lives forever in the presence of God, His very being intercedes for us so that we can do by our union with our High Priest do what no earthly high priest could ever enable us to do - draw near to God, entering the true holy of holies of which the earthly tabernacle was just a symbol.

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brethren, since **we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,**²⁰ by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,²¹ and **since we have a great priest over the house of God,**²² **let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith,** having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

IV. The gift of God's Son as our high priest is superior because of the character of Jesus.

Hebrews 7:26 For it was fitting for us to have **such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;**²⁷ who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this **He did once for all when He offered up Himself.**²⁸ For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, *appoints* a Son, made perfect forever.

- A. Christ was sinless, and therefore did not have to die for His own sins. Once He died for our sins, God in His justice justified Christ.

1 Timothy 3:16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, **was justified in the Spirit**, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

- B. Christ was divine, therefore uniquely qualified to offer to God a sacrifice of equal value to the God whose infinite value we dishonor and devalue by our sin. God can accept the offering of Christ without devaluing and dishonoring Himself. A sinless Adam could not have died for Eve. A sinless archangel could not have become incarnate and offered himself an acceptable sacrifice to God, for his value is not equal to the infinite value of his Creator. Our high priest had to be the sinless God-man who offered up Himself to God for us.

Conclusion

- A. We appreciate the many kinds of gifts we receive at Christmas or throughout the year. Some gifts keep giving year after year. (Slide: palm tree in front of our house - a gift from Jim Hamilton at the death of my father). Yet all these gifts will eventually pass away. Today we who have received Jesus Christ as our great God and Savior, our Great High priest and King, can with sincerity and hope celebrate Him as God's gift that will never pass away. I wish and pray that all who are here, that all of our children would receive Christ as God's undeserved gift of eternal life. God invites all here and everywhere to do so. Otherwise, our life is not merely pointless, it is tragic, as Jesus said of Judas, "it would have been better for that man if he had not been born." For those who reject God's offer of eternal mercy in Christ, God's justice requires eternal consequences - separation from His presence and from every grace in the horrors of hell.

- B. We can receive no greater gift than a high priest who enables us to draw near to our Creator.

Jesus said,

John 10:9 "**I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved**,

- C. For that priest's eternal intercession to be effective, he must have eternal access to the presence of God.
- D. The exalted status of God's divine Son, our crucified, resurrected and reigning priest/king, insures that the objectives of His eternal priesthood are realized for all who draw near to God through Him.

Hebrews 7:25 Therefore **He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**