

Our Risen Lord Serves as Our High Priest

✠ Giving us confidence to pray (4:14-16)

✠ Providing eternal salvation (5:7-10)

In the name of Jesus, our risen Lord and Savior, dearly redeemed people of God:

One of the things we are losing in our society is a sense of our own mortality and along with it the wisdom of knowing our days on earth are numbered. *“Teach us to number our days aright,”* says the Psalmist, *“that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”* (Psalm 90:12 NIV) Living without this common sense realism is like trying to play basketball as if there’s no out-of-bounds, or cooking gourmet without a sense of taste or smell. It’s too easy for Americans to pull the plug even on a patient who is not dying simply for the sake of convenience – as if such a circumstance would never trouble us. We want “do-overs” for broken relationships. And when someone is gone, we like to think our loved ones are still “looking down on us” somehow. We generalize the concept of a “better place” and ignore God’s warning that heaven’s door is narrow, but the gates of hell are gaping wide. Mortality and morality Americans want to ignore.

But just for a moment imagine God’s Word is true. What if this is our one chance to get right with God? What if this truly is a time of grace on earth? What if heaven or hell have no way back to warn anyone from the other side about endless torment or the joys of eternal bliss? Wouldn’t it be helpful to know at least one person who has gone this way before? Wouldn’t you want someone honest who has a special care for you? If you still don’t know Him, it’s high time you did – what He did for us and how He bridges the gap between us and God. As the Bible says it, **Our Risen Lord Serves as Our High Priest.**

✠ Giving us confidence to pray (4:14-16)

When I was a teenager, “the draft” meant Vietnam. These days, it’s more like free agents, salary caps and drafting a better team for next year. Some teams trade away a really good player for a handful of lesser athletes to score more. Americans are bred to think we can always make a better combination.

But what if there were only one player who could win? Or beyond athletics, what if there were only one cell phone that worked? All the fancy buttons and ringer tones, the longest battery life on the sweetest flip phone is worthless without a signal. Yet it seems to me that we Americans are like callers who just keep talking and talking with no idea whether anyone is listening. Here’s what I mean.

Jesus says, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* (John 14:6 NIV) But when Minnesota suffers a tragedy in the Red Lake Band of Ojibwa, the area Christian churches fail. Instead of kindly respecting their loss and their religion, the Christians refuse to share their secret. They could respectfully observe a spiritist funeral, but then invite Native American neighbors to hear the Holy Spirit’s Word about the one Man who saves us all from death. Instead we see pictures of Catholic priests breathing the smoke of a shaman offering up self-made prayers to “the Great Spirit.” How cruel and unkind of the Christians! How blasphemous to God the Holy Spirit who teaches us this treasure: *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.”* The sinful world in our society will do all it can to shake us loose from our faith-grip on God’s own Son. But we need to hold on more tightly to our Champion as the only connection between us and God. **Our great High Priest** was crucified for our sins and now has **Risen** in victory over death itself. No one else can carry our prayers to God.

Let’s say you know a young man living with his grandfather and female companion. He has no real family, no one truly focused on his wants and needs, no one to teach him the unselfish love that every human heart desires. Such a soul will either find himself a violent “family” of malcontents on the Internet, or you could introduce him to the family of God. Everyone knows there’s a God out there,

otherwise, why try so hard to deny Him? But we mortals have two big problems: We do not know who the true God is, nor what to do with the sin that separates us from God. But here in this precious Holy Book we find “*a high priest*” sent by God to “*sympathize with our weaknesses*” – our loneliness, our anger and rage, our discontent and worry. God could just walk away as so many people do. He could just let us burn in hell for destroying His perfect creation with our sin. Instead, He gives us the ultimate “*high priest...who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.*”

When God hands you the cross of Jesus Christ, it’s like handing you a cell phone with 24-7 free minutes from anywhere – on planet earth or outer space. Jesus is always online to take your calls day or night in an limitless call center that cannot overload its circuits. By combining His infinite love for you with His boundless power and wisdom, Jesus can actually focus on your call as if it’s His only care today or forever. But He can do this simultaneously for everyone at once without His battery even blinking. You need someone to care? You need someone to listen? You just want to know someone is there? The cross of Christ is your connection. So let’s dialup! Let’s “*approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*” In other words, it’s okay to say, “God, I need patience now!” He knows tomorrow may be too late. In fact, His answer is always, “Today’s the day!” You see, **Our High Priest** is super busy working for you, still...

✠ Providing eternal salvation (5:7-10)

“Can you hear me now?” “Can you hear me now?” “What about over here. Can you hear me know?” You know the drill. So did Jesus. He was praying everywhere to His heavenly Father, but more like a soldier in a hot combat zone. “*During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.*” Many people don’t realize this because we are all born stubborn and selfish. Our first thought day and night is supposed to be God. Our second thought is always supposed to be everyone else whom God calls our neighbor. But you and I must honestly admit that our first, second and last thoughts are always “me...myself...and I.” Our neighbor we naturally see as someone to use. God, we can barely imagine “from a distance.” We’ve actually earned ourselves a deep hotspot in a smoldering landfill with all the other useless equipment no one wants.

But the true God isn’t like our sinful imaginations want to make Him. Amazing as it is, for us God’s one and only begotten Son willing left heaven to suffer in this place which some misguided depressed souls sometimes refer to as “hell.” But Jesus went all the way to suffer heel for us on the cross. By letting Himself be forsaken by God, **Our High Priest** won our release from that prison designed for the devil and his demons. Instead of throwing away the key, Christ lived and died to pay our penalty!

Jesus, why did you do this for me? You had everything to lose and nothing to gain? Why sacrifice yourself in such agony trusting your heavenly Father to raise you from the dead? Why for me?”

Jesus’ answer is very simple: “Obedience. I learned obedience from what I suffered by submitting to my heavenly Father. Now I want you to live a life of gratitude and thankfulness where you really want to do what pleases me and our Father in heaven.”

Friends, no one else can do this. Jesus is constantly looking down on us from God’s right hand on high. He wants to like what He sees. And He wants our heavenly Father to enjoy the sight so they can bless us now and forever. His Word and sacraments are still **providing** the power of **salvation** from the futility of this life for clarity here and a joyful homecoming in heaven. Mechizedek’s eternal order of priesthood that blessed our father Abraham is still the order of priesthood for Jesus Christ. It never fails in a dead zone. Pick up the phone. Put in your order. Give God’s name as a reference and use His number for unlimited calls. Since **Our Risen Lord Serves as Our High Priest**, He’s everywhere you want to be. And He’s been everywhere you never want to be. That’s why it’s really great to be in His care and keeping. Do you know any lonely souls who still need to know Him? There’s no time like today to call them up and tell them about Jesus. He already paid for the call. Amen.