



Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon- Sunday Judica (Proper B) 2018

*The Eternal Priesthood!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Hebrews 5,1-10:

- <sup>ESV</sup> <sup>1</sup> For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.
- <sup>2</sup> He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.
- <sup>3</sup> Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.
- <sup>4</sup> And no one takes this honour for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.
- <sup>5</sup> So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you";
- <sup>6</sup> as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."
- <sup>7</sup> In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.
- <sup>8</sup> Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.
- <sup>9</sup> And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,
- <sup>10</sup> being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.
- Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, give us ears that can hear and minds that can realise and hearts that believe that Jesus is the One whose sacrifice counts for us and at the same time puts us in a new Covenant. **Amen.**

### • **Dear congregation of Christ!**

• It is risky to go to a doctor with no formal training and certificate to do an operation on say your heart, or whatever it may be. We all want formally appointed judges, well trained, to make up our judiciary. It is good to have people in parliament who can read and write and know what they are about. You want a properly trained mechanic to work on your car or on your washing machine. And if your dentist is not formally trained it might just hurt very much!

- And as we know, training takes time. It costs effort. Sacrifices are involved. Young students or apprentices have to learn and practice a lot to be able to serve customers properly.
- God is a God of order and this is also true for His church. This was the case for the priesthood of the Old Testament. Nobody could just appoint himself to be a priest. The Law given on Mt. Sinai stipulated clearly that only the sons of Aaron, his male descendants, could be priests. The priests had to come from the Levites. And they had to be formerly appointed with sacrifices and a ritual to install them properly as priests before God. These priests were considered properly ordained by God.
- So, we see, each priesthood had its legislation, its Law. The Levitical priesthood was based on the Law that God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The Ten Commandments were given and a full legislation for the OT divine service in the tent of the meeting and later on in the temple in Jerusalem.
- Now, what about the New Testament? On what is it based? What governs the priesthood of the New Testament? Is it a continuation of the Levitical priesthood? Or did Christ take things in His own hands and ordained Himself, as His enemies, even today, claim? Or is there another possibility?
- The lawfulness of Christ's priesthood is sadly a much neglected issue and yet it has huge consequences for other hotly debated subjects, namely whether the OT Law given by God on Mt. Sinai to Moses is still applicable for us in the New Testament!
- The sermon written to the Hebrews answers these questions in great detail. We will only concentrate on some basics today.
- Firstly, the priesthood of Christ did not derive from the Levitical priesthood, for the simple reason that Jesus was a son of David not a descendant of Aaron.
- There is another priesthood installed by God, namely the priesthood after the order of Melchisedek. This priesthood was installed much earlier than the Levitical priesthood. This means, this earlier priesthood was not based on the legislation given at Mt. Sinai to Moses. Remember, the very important principle, each priesthood has its own Law! Each testament has its own document of the will, which comes into effect when the one who has drawn up the will dies. Each priesthood has its own Law.
- Now we need to know, who was this Melchisedek and what type of priesthood did

God give to him. The Holy Spirit quotes Ps 110,4 in the sermon to the Hebrews: *"The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."* In Hebrew "Malchi-zedek" means king of righteousness. Melchisedek was the king of Salem which means peace. And he was the priest of the Most High God [Heb 7,1]. This Melchisedek blessed Abram after he had conquered the kings who had captured Lot, his brothers son, who stayed in Sodom & Gomorrah. He said to Abram [Gen 14,19-20]: *"Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!"* And Abram accepted his blessing by giving him a tenth of the war-spoil.

- Now, Jesus was installed by God Himself, at His Baptism after the order of the priesthood of Melchisedek forever. It was an eternal order not based on any law, but based on the "power of an indestructible Life" [Heb 7,16]. What does this mean? Jesus was God's only begotten eternal Son. Therefore, He was speaking directly for God Himself based on the Word of His Father, "You are a priest forever". Jesus was directly installed by God in an eternal, permanent priesthood by God's promise!! He always lives to make intercession for those who draw near to God through Him.

- So, this priesthood of Jesus the Christ, is based on the promise of God, not on His Law. And here is the deep-seated reason why God did not continue the Levitical priesthood in Jesus: It had no power. It was based on Law only. It was not effective in a sinful world. A better priesthood was necessary which would have the power to save sinners.

- A high priest who would sacrifice Himself, whose eternal blood would be sprinkled on sinners to atone for, to clean consciences and sanctify weak sinful human beings, longing for the righteousness and peace of God! This is what God provided for in Jesus! Thanks be to the Most High God.

- And now it is important for us to realise something very interesting. It says [7-8]: *"In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered."*

- When Jesus was about thirty years old, He was installed as priest forever. Then He started His ministry of suffering and dying on the cross. Now, what about the

## thirty years leading up to His Baptism?

- That was training! Although He was the only begotten Son of God, He received training for thirty years to begin His vocation of suffering and dying, to accomplish his sacrificial mission of dying and presenting His blood in the Most Holy of Holies in heaven, the temple not made with hands.
- He learned obedience through what He suffered! Jesus was a student learning to pray! Jesus made use of prayer and pleas, asking God to resurrect Him! He learned obedience through listening to His Father and through suffering and prayer and became perfect in it, because He did fulfil the will of His Father. He did it for you and He intercedes in this very moment for you, for all those gathered, drawing near to the throne of God. He is the source of our eternal salvation, for all who obey Him.
- And yet, He is one of us. He knows what we need to learn, what we are struggling with in our faith and prayer-life. Don't think training is easy. The Word of God and suffering are necessary for training to grow into priests of God!
- In Baptism we too have received our priesthood. We participate in the priesthood of all believers and we are trained by God, by allowing stressful circumstances and afflictions come our way to train us to pray for ourselves and for others around us and to drive us into His Word. Through suffering we become better in praying to Him, we begin to rely more on Him for our own salvation and resurrection and we begin to pray more earnestly for others. And we learn to pray with humbleness for others, growing in the knowledge that we are just as sinful as all others around ourselves. But suffering alone will not teach us anything. Its suffering enlightened by the Word of God that teaches us that righteousness and peace with God are the highest goods which we can only receive through the intercession of our High Priest who continually intercedes for us. The Word of Christ reveals the true meaning of suffering in our lives so that we realise the blessing of suffering and affliction.
- And this message of comfort and hope, a true light in the darkness, we want to share with so many sufferers all around us, so that this priesthood, the eternal one may reach many more. Lord, have mercy upon us! **Amen.**
- *"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever." **Amen.***