

Virtual Bread

Week 41 (Trinity 20): Day 1 (Monday)

Christ our High Priest

Hebrews 4:14, 5:1–7

1. Opening prayer

Lord Jesus, you alone with the Father and the Holy Spirit dwell in the courts of heaven; and you alone have shared our human life in all its weakness and mortality. You alone have opened up the way to heaven and your holy presence. Direct us on the road to eternal life as we ponder your holy word in the writing to the Hebrews; through Jesus Christ we pray. **Amen.**

2. Read Hebrews 4:14, 5:1–7

Today we read [Hebrews 4:14, 5:1-7](#) (click on the link, see below or turn to p.1003 of the Church ESVUK Bible).

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

⁵For 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. ²He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴And no one takes this honour for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵So 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”; ⁶as he says also in another place,
“You are a priest for ever,
after the order of Melchizedek.”

3. Commentary

One great theme to be found in Hebrews is the way the High Priest of Israel foreshadows the High Priesthood of Christ. One informs the other by way of similarities of function but with the contrast between the two separated by an infinite distance, that between sinful man and God. Verse 14 says of Christ, he is *'... a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.* Israel's high priests were ordinary men, but Christ has ascended to God the Father 'having passed through the heavens. Christ is the Son of God.

Israel's high priests were appointed by God, that is, ⁴... *no one takes this honour for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.* In like manner Christ too was appointed for this work as we read in verses 5 and 6. The reference here is to psalm 2: 7 and to Psalm 110: 4 but we might also recall the voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism 'This is my beloved Son, listen to him.

The task of the High Priest was *'to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.* In effect the High Priest was to stand as a 'bridge' between men and women and God. Being a man from Israel's community, he shared their sinfulness. This meant he had not only to confess the sins of the people he was ³... *to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.* But the sinless Son of God had no need to die for his own sins, nor did he die for the chosen people of Israel alone, but on the cross he paid for the sins of the whole world.

One further aspect of the High Priest is found in verse two ²*He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.* Jesus was fully God as we have noted, but he was also fully man and like Israel's High Priest could sympathise with our ignorant and waywardness. ¹⁵*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

4. Reflection

Consider carefully the contrast the writer to the Hebrews is making between the earthly High Priest and Christ: Christ is the second person of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is He that has borne our sins on the cross; it is He who understands our sinful human natures and sympathizes with us in our struggle with sin and weakness as a man like us and it is He who has ascended far above the heavens and who today intercedes for us before Father.

The issue that most deeply concerned our writer was the way he saw beloved Christians returning to their ancestral faith as revealed in the Jewish Scriptures. But why go backwards to the shadows of faith, when the reality is there in Jesus Christ? Therefore, he urges them ¹⁶*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

This warning not to slip away from the wonder of Christ and his saving grace is as relevant today as in any time past. Have you been tempted in this way? Then draw near to the throne of God and seek his grace and help in our time of need. Let us pray.

5. Prayer

Lord Jesus, you know our hearts; you know our struggles which we share with you now (...) Come afresh to us now, forgive us when we have been tempted to return to past habits and sinful ways and renew in us your love and goodness; for we ask this in the name of Jesus who with the Holy Spirit and the Father reign as One God over all. **Amen**

6. Pray the Collect for this week:

God, the giver of life, whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church: by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ and make us eager to do your will, that we may share with the whole creation the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

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