

We Have a Great High Priest



All of you know that Jesus is our Lord and Saviour. You wouldn't be here this morning if you didn't. You know that Jesus Died and Rose again for us. You also know that right now, Jesus is in Heaven interceding for us. You're here this morning because you know Jesus is Saving us.

But HOW is He saving us?

Many explanations of the HOW have been given:

St. Paul gives us a legalistic explanation in the 8th chapter of Romans. I call it legalistic because he pictures Jesus as our Defense Lawyer taking the punishment that we guilty people deserve onto His shoulders and dying because of it. He dies, and we are released (forgiven). It's the Legalistic Explanation. (Evangelical groups use this explanation all the time.)

But there is another Explanation in the New Testament of HOW Jesus is Saving us—the Priestly Explanation. It is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews—we heard a bit of it read to us this morning. That Lesson ends with the words, Jesus has been “designated by God as a High Priest ...”

This morning, I want to share with you what it means to say that “Jesus is our High Priest”—and how it is vitally important to Anglicans to understand it. When you know why the Bible calls Jesus our “Great High Priest,” you will better understand what Jesus is doing for us right now in Heaven, and what we are doing here every Sunday morning as we celebrate the Eucharist.

1) In the 9th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews we read these words:

“Now a High Priest is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer Gifts and sacrifices for sin.” Now a Sacrifice is a Gift that we offer to God. Sacrifice means Offering—not killing. Sacrifice means Offering something of value to God, as an act of worship.

2) The Jews had a very clear understanding of Sacrifice. It was done like this:

i) A Lamb was chosen—Jesus is the sacrificial “Lamb of God” (see picture above)

ii) The Lamb was killed—Jesus dies on the Cross

iii) The Blood of the Lamb was offered—Jesus offers His Life Blood in Heaven

iv) Part of the Lamb was taken home to be eaten by the family—Jesus gives His Body & Blood in the Eucharist

And that, says the writer of Hebrews, is HOW Jesus saves us.

3) We read in the 9th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews:

“When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tabernacle (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) He entered once for everyone into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves, but His own Blood, thus securing an eternal redemption for us.”

That means that Jesus is now in Heaven, pleading for us—and what is He pleading with?—**He is offering the Perfect Sacrifice of His Life to the Father.** Jesus thus is our High Priest, offering His wonderful Sacrifice right at this very moment, and because of this, we are Forgiven and are Being Saved. As St Paul says: “Jesus ever lives to make Intercession for us.”

4) But I have one last wonderful thing to tell you:

Remember the part of the “Lamb of God” that the Jews took home after the Sacrifice was done? They took it home to roast and eat it—and everyone who shared in that special meal received the Benefits of the Sacrifice that had been offered in the Temple that day.

Well, Jesus made provision for us to do the same. At the Last Supper, Jesus took Bread and Wine, and consecrating them, made them into His Body and Blood. When we come to the Altar to receive the Blessed Sacrament, we are receiving the Benefits of His Glorious and Perfect Sacrifice that He is offering right now in Heaven.

Now, please Open your Hymn Books to Hymn 66 (Canadian Hymn Book)

The words of the 1st verse read like this: (play Hymn 66 softly during reading)

***“And now, O Father, mindful of the love that bought us, once for all, on Calvary’s tree,
and having with us Him that pleads above,
we here present, we here spread forth to Thee,
That only offering perfect in Thine Eyes, the One, True, Pure, Immortal Sacrifice.”***

+ At every Eucharist, we join with Jesus, our Great High Priest, in Offering His Perfect Sacrifice in Heaven in Worship to the Father;

+ At every Eucharist, Jesus joins with us, giving us His Body and Blood.

+ At this very Eucharist this morning, we, priest and people together, along with Jesus our Great High Priest, offer the Sacrifice of Jesus to the Father in Worship and Adoration.

+And then, filled with His Grace from receiving Communion, we leave this Church and go back out into His world to build His Kingdom.

Alleluia, Thanks be to God.