

The Wednesday Word, Nov. 11, 2009: The Merciful and Faithful High Priest

Heb 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

The Eternal Word became flesh in order to redeem us. Indeed, our verse says that, “He was made like unto his brethren.” There was an absolute necessity for Christ to become one of us if ever we were to be saved. Consider our predicament; we are on earth and God is in heaven. We are not pure, and God is intensely holy. How then could He look upon us and grant us grace? The gulf separating us from the all-holy and majestic God was so immense and impassible that we were entirely lost. If ever there was to be someone who could span the divide between God and man and rescue us he would have to become low enough to reach the bottom of the pit we were in (Gen. 18:27). He would also have to be high enough to reach the loftiness of the exalted glory of Yahweh (1 Tim. 6:16). Where do we find someone both low enough and high enough at the same time? The answer is in Christ alone, the Great High Priest; He is the only one who could do this.

This great high priest of ours is both merciful and faithful! Mercy is an interesting word which is inseparably linked to the concept of misery. The objects of mercy are those who are in misery. The miserable sue for mercy! In his misery, for example, Blind Bartimaeus cried out, “Jesus son of David have mercy on me” (Mark 10:47). In His mercy, our priest, the Lord Jesus destroyed the eternal miseries of death and the grave for us! In mercy He destroyed the misery of Satan’s authority over us us. In mercy He took away the misery and mastery of sin and credited us with His righteousness. He is our champion and the captain of our salvation.

But not only is our high priest merciful, He is also faithful. In His faithfulness He finished His work (John 17:4). In His faithfulness, He brings all the needed gifts and blessings of God to us. In His faithfulness, He is our present help in time of trouble! In His faithfulness, He understands and sympathizes with us. In His faithfulness He helps and strengthens us. Because He is faithful in all things we can easily trust Him (1 Peter 2:6).

Don’t be mistaken, there is no access to God without a priest and there is no priest qualified to act on behalf of sinners but Jesus Christ. Unlike other priests, Jesus is perfectly holy. Unlike other priests, He understands all our temptations and struggles. Unlike other priests, He Himself is that one, perfect non-repeatable and finished offering for sin. Unlike other priests, in Him we encounter God. Unlike other priests, He will never die for unlike other priests, He ever lives to make intercession for us. Unlike other priests, mercy and faithfulness meet together in Him. On this point, William Gouge says, “His mercifulness was the ground of His faithfulness and His faithfulness was the evidence of His mercy.

“A Man there is, a real man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
(From which rich streams of blood once ran),
In hands and feet and side.
(Tis no wild fancy of our brains,
No metaphor we speak;

The same dear Man in heaven now reigns,
That suffered for our sake).
This wondrous Man of whom we tell
Is true Almighty God;
He bought our souls from death and hell;
The price, His own heart's blood.”

Jesus by His suffering and death has become our merciful and faithful high priest. He has ascended, presented us to the Father and declared us unblameable and perfect. We are saved by His sacrifice for us, not by our sacrifice for Him. We are saved by His faithfulness to us, not by our strivings to be faithful to Him. We are saved by His merciful and faithful commitment to us, not by our failed efforts of total commitment to Him.

And that's the Gospel Truth!