

Sermon, March 22, 2015, Lent 5

## Jesus our High Priest

Hebrews 5:1–10



Dear friends in Christ

The meditation of God's word is based on the Epistle reading of Hebrews chapter 5. There the writer says of Jesus: "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (v 6). Melchizedek, you might have heard that name before. But who is Melchizedek? Melchizedek is a mysterious figure who comes briefly into the scene of Abraham's life in Genesis chapter 14. Then he is mentioned in one

Psalm 110. And now a couple thousand years later is recalled in the New Testament. Melchizedek we can say is rather a strangely significant person. That might be so, but what does Melchizedek have to do with me, today? What is his implication in my life, today? Why should I hear about Melchizedek? If you would bear with me today, you will be surprised at what the implications are.

Let's start by seen how Melchizedek comes into scene in Abraham's life. Actually at first as you would remember Abraham's name was Abram, it was later that God named him Abraham, which means: "a father of a multitude" "for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.... I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you" God said (Gen 17:5-6)

But before he was named Abraham, God called him to go to a new land God promised to him, and also promised him an heir, for up to this point he was childless. But that God will make his offspring uncountable as the dust of the earth.

And more, God also promised him all kinds of blessings that his name was going to be great on the face of earth.

However, a long time passed and Abram didn't have much to show for it all; his situation in life wasn't going not where, has gotten worse rather than better. Went through difficult times, like enduring a famine in the land where he found himself at some point, then he sought refuge in Egypt but later on he was deported from there, he even had to intervene and mediated a dispute with his nephew Lot.

So, Abram had endured much and still had not yet received the promised heir. His life was not going anywhere so, at the very least, we could say, he needed a sympathetic ear! He needed help and reassurance, even the strength to be back on truck.

But God had something far greater for Abram. And here is one lesson, God works best when you need Him the most, especially when you are doing what He commands to do. One day Abram came in the defense of his nephew Lot's life. Lot was captured by a king, king Chedorlaomer, who was doing battle and warring in the area where Lot lived. Abram had come to the rescue. It was a good rescue in fact, not only saved Lot but actually defeated Chedorlaomer and took back with him a good booty, the spoils of war. (Gen.16)

As the dust of battle begins to settle, and on his way to his home place, a man by the name Melchizedek, the “king of Salem” and priest of God Most High, suddenly appears to Abram—with bread and wine, no less!

This is what Geneses tells us: “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)<sup>19</sup> And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;<sup>20</sup> and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.<sup>21</sup> And the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.”<sup>22</sup> But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth,<sup>23</sup> that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’<sup>24</sup> I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me...” (Gen 14:18-24)

Look at what happened, Melchizedek blesses Abram, vindicates him, and defends his cause. So Abram is strengthened to continue patiently waiting for the Lord’s promise.

That’s it. That’s all biblical history records about Melchizedek. But are you beginning to guess why the psalmist and the writer to the Hebrews bring him up millennia later—and why he’s so significant for us today? Or are you still wondering why we go back again in historical accounts? Here is the point of the story, what Melchizedek was to Abram back then, Christ is for us as today and always.

Here is the point: In Holy Baptism, you, I, like Abram, have been called by God, also to be great in His sight, to be His children his prized position, to life eternal. Wasn’t going to be an easy life or worldly glory to be sure. But while we wait for an eternal glory with Jesus, Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel reading that our call is to be servants, not masters, and to be slaves, not lords.

Now, if that is what we must do, then like Abram, our worldly situation isn’t always that pretty. And unlike Abram, we do not battle with kings, earthly kings, but with the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, and that proves to be a hard battle! Doesn’t it!

In many ways, we can identify with the Hebrew Christians to whom our text was written. Like Abram, they had discovered that their faith and loyalty to God exposed them to trial and suffering. And what were they to do? Were they to fall back or press on?

No if we identify with those Hebrew Christians and with Abram, then those questions also apply to us. When life seem hard and we don’t have anything to show for, do we fall back or press on? Sadly, many have fallen back. Many have left their “first love,” many upon encountering troubles and difficulties, upon realizing that their lives were or are not what they planned for, or expected to be, they have fallen back. That too dear friends is another reason why our churches are shrinking today. Not so much because they have given into the thoughts of the world but they have grown unhappy with what they think they should be getting from God but are not. They have been baptized, confirmed, and even served in leadership then, all of a sudden there is nothing to show for. And when there is nothing to show for the tendency is to fall back.

Now, is falling back is what you have done, dear friend, you need a sympathetic ear. If that is what is happening in our lives, we need God’s ear! Today! Now!

Have we been mistreated? Is the world, sin and satan, dominating you unfairly? Then you need vindication! And more you need a Priest that will intercede for you, that will bring your case to God the Father. Today you can certainly pray with the psalmist: "Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!" (Psalm 43:1)

And the Good News is that today, He is ready, as He has been all the time, ready to be your Priest and your Savior.

And more, actually we all, from time to time need God's sympathetic ear, don't we! We need to pray with the psalmist: "Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!" (Psalm 43:1)

In these words the psalmist pleads with God to hear his voice and deliver his soul from death, his eyes from tears, and his feet from stumbling, and God, as he promised Abram He will do for him, God also promises He will do for us. And as a result of Him hearing us, He will also help us to have a sympathetic ear for those who are going through difficult time, and in the process lead them to Christ, for after all Christ is the one who will give us victory over sin, death and satan. After all His victory is our victory. Like us, Jesus also was affected by weakness, only He did it for us. But God the Father vindicated him and brought him back to life for us!

So if you have fallen back, and if you from time to time fall back, or if the world has you by the neck, you, we need vindication. We need a high priest after the order of Melchizedek! Somebody who would vindicate and defend our case.

Here is the good News, Christ is to us as Melchizedek was to Abram—and more.

Christ intercedes for us. He knows our weakness and how we readily lose hope but He asks the father not to forsake us when we abandon Him. Not to disown him when we disown him. And to show us mercy when we despair.

He can do because he bought us with his obedient life. He never fall back but suffered in our place and for each one of us so that we would not suffer eternal condemnation because we fall back.

And yes He vindicates us but giving us strengthen, peace and victory as we continue with our journey, and in the end the greatest vindication of all, salvation and eternal life.

That's what a Priest, a true priest, of the Highest order can do. And more, even Melchizedek couldn't save our lives with His death, but Jesus did.

But like Melchizedek feeding Abram bread and wine, Christ feeds us. In, with, and under the bread and wine, he gives us his very body and blood to forgive our sin, strengthen our faith, and energize us to press on.

Like Melchizedek, Christ blesses us by his Word, and by that Word he vindicates us from our enemies: sin, death, and Satan. Christ is indeed our only and God appointed High Priest! "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (v 6) in the order of Melchizedek because He is appointed by God for ever to be our Savior and Lord.

*Conclusion:*

"Blessed be Abram," Melchizedek said, and you too, "by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" (Gen 14:19–20).

The same blessings are for each and every one of you today!

In his name, Amen.