

March 22, 2015  
Hebrews 5:1-10

Lent 5B  
After the Order of Melchizedek

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Lenten King. Amen.*

Our text tells us this morning something of Jesus. “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” The writer of the Hebrews is quoting from Psalm 110. So fair enough, it’s true. Jesus is after the order of Melchizedek. Who is Melchizedek? Melchizedek is a mysterious figure who suddenly crosses the stage in Genesis 14, exits, and then is recalled in the Psalms and later in the New Testament. Yet, he is strangely a significant person. If he wasn’t, why would Jesus be likened to him.

Melchizedek appears, unbidden, at one of the lowest points of Abram’s journey through life. Abram—later God changed his name to Abraham—we do know. Abram has been called by God to go to new land, and he has been promised an heir. Abram has already been told that his offspring will be as uncountable as the dust of the earth, the sand on the seashore, the stars in the sky. God has promised to bless him and make his name great.

However, after several years, Abram does not have much to show for it all; his situation in life has gotten worse, rather than better. Abram has endured famine, sought refuge in Egypt, been deported from Egypt, and mediated a dispute with his nephew Lot.

In Genesis 14 we learn that he has just now been drawn into a war with “Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar”. It shouldn’t have been his fight; he only went off to war to save Lot, who had been taken prisoner.

Abram has endured much in his life and still has not received his promise heir. God has yet to fulfill his promise. So, at the very least, he needs a sympathetic ear.

But God, being God, has something far greater for Abram. As the dust of the battle begins to settle, this man Melchizedek, the “king of Salem” and priest of God Most high, suddenly appears to Abram—with bread and wine, no less! Melchizedek blesses Abram, vindicates him, and defends his cause. And 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?

**Let me tell you this. Christ is for us as Melchizedek was to Abram, and even more.**

Like Melchizedek, Christ enters our life right when we need him, but he never disappears.

In Holy Baptism, we, like Abram, have been called by God. It is not to life of ease or worldly glory. Jesus tells us in today's Gospel that our call is to be servants, not masters, and to be slaves, not lords. What does a servant look like? As I think about the servants in life, people that are there when you need them the most. I think of our Nurse Midwife that we had when Miriam was born and all throughout that pregnancy. We left for the hospital at about 10:30 PM on Thursday, January 9 and it almost felt like Kathy beat us to the hospital. She slept at the hospital all night and was there to deliver little Miriam at about 7:30 in the morning. She was there when we needed her, gave up her sleep for that night to be there. She was a servant. She was there, right when we needed her. Are we there for people, when people need us? Will we respond when called upon to act?

Like Abram, our worldly situation isn't always that pretty. We do not battle with kings but with the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. We battle all the time with our self-righteousness, with our pride. We battle with different priorities. We battle with things the world calls more important than our faith. We battle different worldviews. We battle our own personal sins. Our sins of greed, lust, pride, hate, jealousy and so much more. We are suffering in battle, we are hurting in battle, just like Abram.

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. Were they to fall back or press on? Are we to fall back or press on? Our faith and loyalty to God expose us to trial and suffering. We know it. We live it. When we express our faith and loyalty to God, who attacks – the world. There are things that we can't say by the law of public opinion. We have grown afraid to speak to things that matter, like the protection of all life, standing up for marriage the way God intends. Even when we mention who Jesus is and what He did, we are exposed to trial and suffering.

Definitely at time like this, at least we need a sympathetic ear.

At times like this we turn to those who can deal with us gently and who know as best anyone can what we are going through. Who do you go to for a sympathetic ear? Is it your best friend, your spouse, your mom or dad, a brother or sister, your pastor, perhaps another brother or sister in Christ? But as good as that can be for us, our brothers and sisters in Christ are, like us, also beset by weakness.

We need more—we need vindication. We need a high priest after the order of Melchizedek!

We have one! This is where Christ is to us as Melchizedek was to Abram—and more.

Christ intercedes for us! He does. St. Paul writes to the Romans in chapter 8: “*Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*”<sup>1</sup> Christ does intercede for us. He takes our wants, our needs to His Father. The author of Hebrews tells us about the interceding Jesus: “*23 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. 25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*”<sup>2</sup> Jesus is constantly interceding for us. He knows our needs. He takes your sufferings, your pains and hands them over to His Father. He goes to His Father and your Father for you. On the cross, Christ was speaking to His Father to forgive you of your sins. He was taking even that very important need to Your Father.

Christ is obedient for us! Christ humbled himself for you, even to the point of death, death on the cross. Christ lived a life of perfection. Even as you are tempted in this world and suffer because of Satan, know that Jesus was tempted in every way yet is without sin. In the verses right before our text from Hebrews 5, we hear these words from Hebrews 4 “*14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 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. 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.*”<sup>3</sup> Jesus knows the temptations you face, but yet was obedient. He did not sin. Therefore, He went to the cross for you to save you and bring to your forgiveness.

Christ suffers for us! We are a week away from the Holy Week of our Lord where we will once again here about the sufferings and death of Jesus. Christ Jesus suffered for you. Yes we suffer in this world, but He suffered all the more, He took the weight of your sin on His back and went to the cross, where He suffered from the hands of men, with whips, and scourges, and nails, and thorns. He suffered from the voices of men with the mockings and betrayals and denials. He suffered even from the actions of His own Father, who abandoned Him on the cross. God the Father forsook His Son. Jesus Christ suffered so much for you so that you can have life.

Because of those sufferings for you, because of that obedience for you, because of those intercessions for you. Christ is the only source of your eternal salvation. Christ Jesus died and rose for you so that you may have life and have it abundantly.

If you noticed, I told you that Melchizedek brought to Abram bread and wine to drink. Jesus as our Melchizedek also feeds us with bread and wine. In, with, and under the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Ro 8:34–35). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Heb 7:23–25). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Heb 4:14–16). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

bread and wine, He gives us his very body and blood to forgive our sin, strengthen our faith and energize us to press on. He gives us His body and blood for us to eat and strength so that we can live in peace. Peace that enlivens our hearts and minds to press in in the world.

Like Melchizedek, Christ blesses us by His Word, and by that Word He vindicates us from our enemies: sin, death, Satan. By His Word, He spoke creation into being, and by His Word He defeats our enemies for us. He won victory over sin, by never sinning, and by taking our sins on himself on the cross and forgave us. He won His victory over death, as He walked out of the tomb, that wonderful message that we hear every Sunday, but in all of its miraculous grandeur we will hear in two weeks. He won His victory over Satan as He lived His life, as He died His death, and lives His Life again. He went to Hell to declare victory over Satan on that first Easter morning. By His very own life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ vindicates you from your enemies and He shares that message with us in His Very WORD, the Holy Scriptures.

“Blessed be Abram,” Melchizedek said, and you too, “By God Most High, Possess of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” (Genesis 14:19-20).

IN Jesus Name. Amen.

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, our Great High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek, who is are Lenten King. Amen.*