

Sermon – Hebrews 9.11-26 (Good Friday – 2024)

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹¹ But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,

¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

¹⁶ For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

¹⁷ For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.

¹⁸ Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood.

¹⁹ For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,

²⁰ saying, "This *is* the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you."

²¹ Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.

²² And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

²³ Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

²⁴ For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

²⁵ not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another--

²⁶ He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

On Mt. Sinai, God instructed Moses to construct the Tabernacle. Made of wood, linen, and gold and other metals, the Tabernacle would be the place of God's earthly presence among His people. It would be the place where the people would gather to worship God and offer sacrifices to Him. The tabernacle moved from place to place as God led them through the wilderness, until they crossed the Jordan into Canaan, and there the Tabernacle remained

in the town of Shiloh for quite some time. Eventually, the Temple was built in Jerusalem during the time of Solomon as a permanent structure for God's presence.

Countless sacrifices took place there at the Tabernacle. Bulls, goats, lambs, and birds were sacrificed, and the blood would be sprinkled upon the furniture of the Tabernacle, cleansing these imperfect representations of the perfection that is there in heaven. The sacrifices were also offered for the sake of the people. But the blood of these sacrifices did not really atone for the peoples' sins. They provided ceremonial and Levitical cleanliness. These sacrifices pointed forward to the true and effective sacrifice, which is Christ.

Now in the Tabernacle, there was the outer court where there was the water basin for washing, and the altar for the sacrifices. But then there was a structure within the Tabernacle. One part of it was the Holy Place, and the entrance was closed off by a curtain. Only the priests could enter. But then behind another curtain was the Holy of Holies. This space was as the name suggests a very holy place, and was most carefully guarded from any sacrilege. This space was where the Ark of the Covenant was situated, upon which was the mercy seat surrounded by the gold cherubim. This is where God dwelt among His people in great holiness. If anyone, even a priest, entered the Holy of Holies when he should not, or without following the protocol commanded by God, he would die. Only one day a year—the Day of Atonement—a priest could enter behind the curtain into the Holy of Holies. On that day He would offer the blood of a goat as atonement for the people of Israel. And year after year, the high priest had to repeat the sacrifice, according to the Old Covenant.

What we find our reading talking about today is what occurred on Good Friday. It is the sacrifice that the Day of Atonement, and all the other sacrifices of the Old Covenant pointed forward to. As glorious as the gold covered Tabernacle was, with all the blessings of the sacrifices, this New Covenant, established by the new Mediator is even more glorious. And what blessing it is to ponder the sacrifice that we observe this Good Friday. This was the sacrifice that truly atones for the world's sins.

And so there was the true and Real High Priest, the One whom all other high priests indicated. And the Son of God, Jesus Christ Himself, takes that role. And He will enter into the Holy of Holies to offer a once for all sacrifice for the world. But it is not into the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple that He goes. Remember, that that is just a copy of the Holy Place of God in heaven. As He makes His way to Calvary, He is also approaching before the Father's throne in heaven to offer sacrifice. He enters the heavenly holy place before the judgment seat of the Father, and the sacrifice that the High Priest offers is His own divine life. The Lamb of God, condemned falsely by men, is also condemned by God for the sins of the world, your sins and mine. His shed blood on the cross, and the life He gives up on the cross is the acceptable sacrifice that atones for our sins.

When He went before the Father in the Holiest heaven, He went bearing all our sins upon Himself. What sinner can stand before God and His holiness? If a priest could so easily die in the Holy of Holies, how we would be doomed before the holy throne of God in heaven! But Jesus, the Lamb of God went in our place, and suffered the doom in our place!

The Father accepts the sacrifice.

The Father accepted the sacrifice of Jesus for you. And so Good Friday worshippers, do not despise the sacrifice by clinging to your sin through impenitence, or thinking that your works are a better or more meritorious sacrifice before the holy Father in heaven. Do not belittle your sin and thus belittle the sacrifice and God's holiness. Rather, confess your sins before God, those sins that would utterly condemn you before the throne of the Holy God.

And be at peace, for Christ has offered His life on the cross to the Father as the sacrifice for your sins. No other sacrifice is needed for your forgiveness and salvation. His sacrifice was once and for all, sufficient to cover all of your sins. And when His sacrifice was complete, we see another symbol at the temple that tells us of the reality that we have before the Father in heaven.

The thick curtain of the Temple, perhaps standing 60' tall, that separated man from the holy place of God, ripped into two. And Matthew's gospel provides the detail: it ripped from top to bottom. God accepted the sacrifice of His Son, and thus by ripping the curtain, He shows that the barrier of sin that separated us from Him has now been taken away! Through Christ, we are forgiven, at peace with God, and have full access to Him. Through Jesus, we know that we will stand before His throne unafraid, and stand there even as His children, to live in His glorious presence forever.

And thus we know that we can also come with believing hearts to the threshold of heaven tonight in the presence of our Holy God, and here partake of the sacrifice that won our peace with God and gave us the right to live and rejoice in His presence. Christ's body and blood given to you confirm your forgiveness and salvation, and give you all the blessings of His sacrifice. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.