

Before The Throne Of God Above

Music: Vikki Cook
Words: Charitie L. de Chenez (1841-1923)

See print copy for words.



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We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.... [Hebrews 4:15](#)

Old Orchard Church
November 4, 2012—10:15 to 11:50 a.m.

Celebrating The Three Offices of Christ: Jesus Our Priest

A priest mediates between man and God,
between man the rebel and God the Holy.
No priest of the Old Covenant
could ever care for God's people as Christ cared.
He, all sympathy and all compassion,
knows our weakness,
and offered himself up as sacrificial victim,
bearing wrath for our sake.
He, not born in the priestly line,
became our Great High Priest at the cross.
Bring now your sacrifices of praise
to him who continues to intercede for us!
Praise the high name of Jesus.



Scripture Readings

Old Testament Lesson: from Exodus 28 & 29
Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Sermon

“The Life of the Church and the Power of Demons”

Ephesians 1:18-23; 3:8-12; 6:10-13; Acts 26:16-18; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

Ron Lutjens, pastor, preaching

We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate.

But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.

On Why We Need A Priest

Last weekend a couple of us went to see the novel-turned-musical, *Les Miserables*, playing at the Fox Theater in Midtown. The French author of the 1862 novel, Victor Hugo, hated the Church; but in the central protagonist of his story, Jean Valjean, Hugo got right one of the core concepts of priesthood in the Bible: the priest is one who stands in for others and mediates, *pleads their cause before a higher authority because they cannot plead successfully themselves*. That's what Jean Valjean did, in several relationships, and it was profoundly moving to see that “priestly intercession” taking place on the stage.

That's what God the Son did for us—in fact, that's why he came: because God is holy, and we are not, and that fact puts a cavernous divide between us. But God is also love. God's holiness is why we need a priest; his love is why he sent his Son to take human flesh to be one for us. A priest stands between God and human beings. He represents to us the demands of God who is pure; and, on our behalf, before the face of God the Just, he offers sacrifice to cover the guilt of our corrupted hearts and unjust lives.

All this flies in the face of the modern notion that God's love is an indulgent sort of thing. The modern world has tamed God. Of course, he **is** Father, with a heart full of love; but he is also Judge who demands payment for our offenses against the Divine majesty, of which all the beauty we see in the world is but a pale reflection. To say that God is holy is to say not only that he is morally pure, but also that the splendor of his being is far above our finite and besmirched splendor. And it means that we, who sin and stain the splendor God gave us when he made us in his image, cannot be at peace with God without an advocate, a mediator, *a priest*.

But that's what Christ is for us; that's what we celebrate this morning! We need no longer dread the holiness of God nor deny it. When we come to Jesus in humble faith, owning our guilt instead of papering it over with smiles and respectable behavior, Jesus becomes for us a High Priest who pleads before the bar of Divine justice not our own moth-eaten righteousness but his own perfect life and sacrificial death on the cross.

So if you're trusting in Christ this morning, rebuke your fear, turn your back on your guilty conscience, laugh at anything that shames you. If Christ is pleading your case, who cares who or what is against you?

—Ron Lutjens