

Lent 1  
Hebrews 4:14-16  
February 21, 2010

We have a great High Priest. He is Jesus, The Son of God. The chief work of the High Priest during Israel's Old Testament history was to function as a mediator between the Holy God and sinners.

We, therefore, needed a high priest. We are sinners. It is of great comfort to hear this Word of God tell us, "We have a great High Priest."

No other High Priest, including the first one, Aaron, brother of Moses, is called great. These brief verses show us that Jesus is rightly called the Great High Priest.

He's great for us!

#### A High Priest Who Understands Is a Great Comfort to Us!

One of the reasons Jesus is called the Great High Priest is that He really understands our weaknesses.

Sin causes many weaknesses in us. Sin causes us not to treat God as God. Sin causes us not to regard God's Word as the Word of God.

This morning we heard of a man named Achan. God had told the Israelites that when God gave them the city of Jericho, they were to take nothing from Jericho for themselves. But Achan saw a pricey garment, gold and silver. The temptation to steal it came from his inborn sinful nature. He wanted it. Coveting is wanting what isn't yours. In this case, God had made it clear to all of them that nothing from Jericho ever was to be theirs. Achan fell to the temptation, took the goods and hid them in his residence. Surely, his conscience went off even as the thought of taking it first hit him. After his conscience alarmed, certainly Achan thought of what God had clearly said. When he took the stuff in hand, his conscience screamed louder – Wrong, Wrong, STOP! The fact that he hid it shows that guilty feelings stayed with him. After all that help, Achan still did not come clean until he was discovered.

Sin causes weaknesses also in regard to other people. Envy or anger or vengeance easily pits us against people. Sin's very basic evil of self-regard lies behind everything we've been illustrating. We regard what we want above God's Word. We think more highly of ourselves than of others. This self-ism shows often!

Satan understands our weaknesses very well. He uses that knowledge to hurt us and has the goal of keeping us apart from God now and forever. That's what he wants. And when a need comes along, real or imagined, Satan is expert at trying to turn that need –

real or imagined – into sin. With every need or problem, satan will suggest a self-solution.

But Jesus understands our weaknesses and needs, too. Jesus uses this knowledge to help us, having the goal of leading us to eternal salvation. Jesus knows us, including the fact of our sinful nature. Jesus knows how sin works in us and on us. He also knows our enemy, the devil. Jesus threw him out of heaven. Our Lord knows the tempter's methods: the so-called half truths, lies, deceit, abuse of Scripture, false flattery. As we heard in the Gospel reading this morning, Jesus faced satan's methods head on, personally. And did you catch that statement of Luke at the end, "the devil left Jesus until an opportune time"? Satan saw that case as an opportunity because Jesus was very hungry.

Our enemy doesn't miss opportunities to try to destroy us. We miss opportunities; he doesn't.

Remember a really important thing, the devil is a fallen angel, but our High Priest is the Son of God. Satan is a strong, though ruined, angel. Jesus is almighty God.

Jesus knows us our needs, our weaknesses to eh devil's ways perfectly. Christ came here as our great High Priest. He never sinned, though tempted relentlessly by the devil to do so. Never sinned means perfectly righteous. That righteousness our Savior gifts to us. And our sin, all of it, Jesus took on Himself and died for us on His cross. Jesus rose from the dead. Since death is a wage sin pays, the fact that Jesus beat death let's us know with certainty that Jesus defeated and atoned for our sin. Jesus ascended and had gone through the heavens. The heavens are beneath Him. He is above them. His is the King and Ruler over everything, with the Father and the Spirit.

The Father sent His Son to be the Savior. Jesus came and did that saving from sin, death, hell, and satan's abuse.

As our Great High Priest, Jesus – born of a Mary, a true Man; the Son of God, true God, has won mercy and grace from God for us.

Because of Jesus we can go right to the throne of grace. That's God's throne.

I noticed something interesting. There are eight verses in the Old Testament that identify the LORD as the One who sits enthroned between the Cherubim, or on Zion. That is a reference to the Ark of the Covenant, which was kept in the holiest room of the temple on Mt. Zion. Into that room, only the High Priest entered, and only once a year, with the blood of bulls and goats to make atonement for all the sins of the people on the cover of the Ark of the Covenant.

But Jesus made atonement for all the sins of all people with His own blood when He offered Himself as God's sacrifice by death on the cross. And now, because of Jesus, we

can go to God's throne ourselves. In fact, it says here, we can do it confidently. Jesus is a Great High Priest! Even more Bible verses say God is enthroned above the heavens. Old Testament Israel could never enter the place of God's earthly enthronement. We are urged to enter the heavenly throne room.

We will receive mercy there; we will find grace – God's gift of favor and love, to help us in every time of need, including every time we are tempted by the sin inside us or by other sinners or even by satan and his demons outside us, when in need, when weak, when tempted, immediately go to the throne of grace in Jesus' name.

Rely on Jesus the Son of God, our Great High Priest, gone through the heavens, who has defeated sin, temptation and the devil sinlessly, who has died for us and risen again. Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess! Amen.