

Jesus: Prophet, Priest, King

“Part 2: The Priest Who Reconciles”

Selected Texts

Delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic via Livestream at Central Baptist Church on December 13, 2020

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** One of the greatest preachers in the 20th century was a man named Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He once made a statement that helps us to be clear on what Christianity *is* and what it *is not*. He pointed out that Christianity, at its heart, is about good news, not good advice. These are two very different things.
 - When someone gives advice they are telling you to do something in order to achieve a better future. The assumption is that you can do it.
 - News is very different. News is a report about something that has already happened. You cannot do anything about it. You can only respond or react in light of the news of what happened.
 - The distinction between good news and good advice is the dividing line between Christianity and every other religion, spiritual path, or self-help book. Christianity is about good news, which is the word “gospel.” Every other worldview is about good advice.
- Lloyd-Jones illustrates this by asking us to imagine an ancient city that is being threatened by the invading forces of an evil nation. That nation has crossed the border, burning and killing everything in its path. In response, the good king of the country leads his army out to fight before the enemy arrives at the capital city.
 - There are two potential scenarios. First, if the good king wins he will send messengers, ‘good newsmen’, running back to the city. They will announce the news saying, **“Our king has won. Be joyful and live your lives in light of this good news.”**
 - In the second scenario the king loses and has to retreat. He does not send messengers back to the city. Instead, he sends military advisors who gather the people and say, **“Follow our advice. This is what you must do. Grab a sword and fight for your lives.”**
- Every other religion or system of thought sends military advisors. **“If you want happiness, salvation, enlightenment, self-fulfillment, then this is what you must do. Here is Oprah’s advice. Here is the Buddha’s teaching. Here are the six keys to successful living. Follow the advice. Fight for your life.”**
 - But Christianity sends messengers, good newsmen, who say, **“Something huge has been accomplished on your behalf. Now live in light of this good news!”**
 - Christmas is such a wonderful time because it is all about the good news of what God has done for us.

WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS?

- So let's begin broadly and simply ask, **(SHOW SLIDE 2) What is the good news of Christmas? Christmas is about how God became a man in order to fulfill the office of a prophet, a priest, and a king.**
 - That does not immediately strike us as the best news we have ever heard. We're not even sure what it means. But this is extremely profound and could not be more practical for your life.
 - So let me give the big picture of it all then we will zero in on how Jesus is our priest.
- **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 3)** In the big picture this is what theologians call "the threefold office of Christ." An office is an official role, like when we refer to the office of the Prime Minister. So the good news is that Jesus came into this world to take on not one, but three official roles. He did three things for you. This big picture also takes us right back to the beginning.
- When human beings were originally created we enjoyed three things.
 - First, we had true knowledge of God and therefore a right understanding of life.
 - Secondly, we were righteous and pure, able to dwell in the presence of the holy God.
 - Thirdly, we joyfully lived under God's benevolent kingly rule. Under his rule we enjoyed a perfect relationship with God, with each other, and with the planet.
- But when Adam and Eve sinned the human race lost all three.
 - First, our minds were darkened and we became ignorant. We believe false things about God, and became unable to perceive reality correctly.
 - Secondly, we became guilty, unrighteous, and morally corrupt and therefore we cannot dwell with God.
 - Thirdly, we came under the slavery of sin and Satan.
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 4– recreate the table below)** So we have a threefold disease of ignorance, guilt, and slavery.

The Good News Of Christ's Threefold Office		
Our Problem		
Ignorance		
Guilt		
Slavery		

- Listen, advice cannot cure these things. We cannot cure ourselves. We are not smart enough, we cannot cleanse our guilt, and we cannot free ourselves.
 - Our only hope is that a cure be provided for us.
- This is the grand story of the Bible. In his grace, God did not leave us in our ignorance, guilt, and slavery. Right away the God of grace began do things on our behalf to cure our threefold disease.

- First, in the OT, God gave people *understanding* into who He is and the nature of reality by speaking through people whom he called to be “prophets.” God taught us the truth.
- Secondly, God sent priests who offered up sacrifices and prayers on behalf of the people’s guilt in order to *reconcile* them back to God.
- Third, God gave kings like David who ruled as His representative over his people and *freed* people from their enemies.
 - The prophet revealed, the priest reconciled, and the king ruled.
- The threefold disease began to be cured but it was only a partial cure because mere men could not perfectly fulfill these offices.
 - There were false prophets and even the revelation of the true prophets was only partial. The priest’s animal sacrifices only covered the guilt of sin but did not do away with it. And the kings often abused power and did not rule well.
 - But God promised that one day He would send one man who would perfectly fulfill all three offices, bringing the much-needed cure to the fatal threefold disease.
- The message of Christmas, of Advent, is that in Jesus, the God-man, all three offices were fulfilled. **(SHOW SLIDE 5– recreate the table below)**

The Good News Of Christ’s Threefold Office		
Our Problem	Christ’s Offices	Result
Ignorance →	Prophet →	Understanding
Guilt →	Priest →	Reconciliation
Slavery →	King →	Freedom

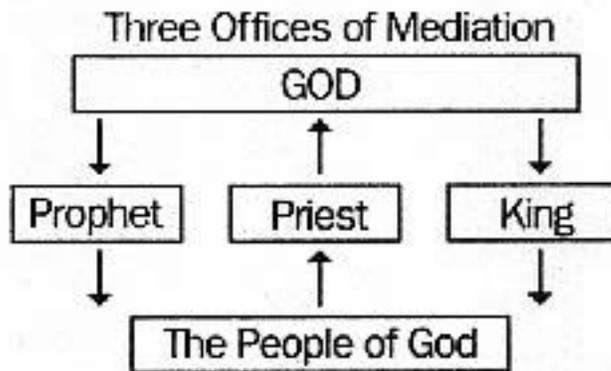
- This is good news, not good advice. The good news is that Jesus has done for us what we cannot for ourselves. As our prophet, Jesus teaches us and so we gain understanding. As our priest, Jesus reconciles us back to God. As our king, Jesus defeats our enemies and gives us freedom.
- So that is the big picture of the threefold office of Christ. It helps us understand exactly what Jesus did that is such good news.
 - Last week we looked at how Jesus cures our ignorance in fulfilling the office of prophet.
 - Let’s turn now to consider the news of what Jesus has done to cure our guilt. This is about **(SHOW SLIDE 6) Part 2: Jesus – The Priest Who Reconciles.**

THREE CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

- Let’s begin by asking three questions to clarify what we are talking about.
 - Question #1: **(SHOW SLIDE 7) What is a priest?**
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 8) A priest acts as a mediator between God and people by offering sacrifices for their sin and praying on their behalf.**
 - Hebrews 5:1 says, **(SHOW SLIDE 9 – put this on the same slide as the one before it) “For every high priest chosen from among**

men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.”

- The priest also represented the people by making intercession. That is, he prayed to God on their behalf.
- Question 2: (SHOW SLIDE 10) How does a priest differ from a prophet?
 - They are the same in that they must be appointed by God. Heb 5:4 says, (SHOW SLIDE 11 – put this on the same slide as the one before it) “And no one takes this honor [of being a priest] for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.”
 - But here is a chart to show how they differ: (SHOW SLIDE 12– recreate the image below but remove the title about mediation to clean it up) a prophet was God’s representative to his people. The prophet speaks for God to the people. The priest however is the people’s representative to God. The priest spoke to God on behalf of the people.



- Question 3: (SHOW SLIDE 13) Why do we need a priest?
 - This is where all this Old Testament teaching gets so practical. It is saying, you need a priest. You need someone to mediate between you and God.
 - Now of course, today people say, “Why would I need that? I’m a good person. I’m sure God will accept me.” Ah but, this is where we must listen to the prophets. They teach us and tell us that we are wrong to think that way.
- You see the Bible says that (SHOW SLIDE 14) “there is no one righteous, no not one. . . . All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom 3:10, 23).
 - As a result of our sin, the Bible says that (SHOW SLIDE 15) “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement.” (Heb 9:27).
 - And anyone who is found guilty of sin will hear from God the worst words that can ever befall a human ear, (SHOW SLIDE 16)

“depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Mt 25:41)

- **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 17)** So you see, the Bible says we all have a very big problem. We are all guilty and will face judgement. No amount of advice can help us because we cannot clear our own guilt. Once again, this is where the Bible is good news.
 - Again, the good news begins in the Old Testament. God provides priests. Priests are mediators who represent the people before God. They offer sacrifices to cover people’s sins and they pray to God on behalf of the people.
 - But as we will see no priest could fully save us. All of this points forward to Christmas. The entire book of Hebrews argues that Jesus came into the world to be our great high priest. That Jesus is the final and ultimate high priest who is able to clear our guilt and bring us back to God.
- So let’s turn finally to see how Jesus does this.

JESUS, THE PRIEST WHO OFFERED A BETTER SACRIFICE

- **(SHOW SLIDE 18)** Jesus the God-man is the final and ultimate high priest because He offered a perfect sacrifice on our behalf.
 - In the Old Testament if you sinned you would place your hand on the head of an animal, symbolically transferred your sins to the animal. The priest would then sacrifice the animal and bring its blood before the Lord on your behalf so that your sins were covered.
- But there was no perfect priest for at least two reasons.
- First, the priest himself was a sinner and so had to offer sacrifices for his own sins. Hebrews 5:3 says, **(SHOW SLIDE 19) Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.**
 - Second, the Old Testament sacrifices could not actually put away sin. They could only cover it. And so animal after animal had to die. The priests were basically professional butchers. The blood flowed.
 - All of this points to the need for a better priest and a better sacrifice. Jesus is that better priest and he offered a better sacrifice.
- Jesus is the perfect priest because he is without sin and therefore does not have to offer sacrifice for himself. Hebrews 7:27 says, **(SHOW SLIDE 20) “He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.”**
 - Also Jesus offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin. Jesus is the priest and the sacrifice.
 - Thirdly, whereas the OT sacrifices could not do away with sin and had to be perpetually offered, Jesus’ sacrifice was once and for all and was utterly sufficient. And so Hebrews 9:26-28 says, **(SHOW**

SLIDE 21) he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

- **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 22)** Now that is good news. You and I have a serious guilt problem. If the guilt of our sins is not removed we will be judged guilty. How will you purge your guilt? Every other system of thought gives advice – help others more, do more rituals, read your Bible, go to worship, or just deny you have guilt. In other words, do better and do more. But nothing we do can atone for our guilt.
 - Oh but look at what Jesus did. Jesus is the sinless priest. Jesus offered himself as the perfect sacrifice. Our guilt has been punished, but praise be to God, it does not have to be punished in us. Jesus voluntarily took the punishment for us.
 - Anyone who comes to him is cleansed. Your guilt is removed and you are reconciled to God. That is why we sing: **(SHOW SLIDE 23)**
 - **Guilty, vile, and helpless we;
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
“Full atonement!” can it be?
Hallelujah! What a Savior!**
 - This offer of pardon and cleansing goes out to all. No sin is too great. No guilt too heavy. For good news of Christmas is that Jesus, the God man, has done something. He has perfectly fulfilled the office of a priest.

JESUS AS PRIEST CONTINUALLY INTERCEDES FOR US

- Let us turn now to the second priestly function. What is the second function of a priest? He intercedes on behalf of the people to God.
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 24) Jesus the God-man is the final and ultimate high priest because he always lives to intercede on our behalf.**
- Why is Jesus’ work of intercession so crucial for us? Let me ask you something: Why did Judas, the betrayer of Christ, go down to destruction while Peter, the denier of Christ, was saved?
 - In that critical moment at the last Supper when Judas is about to betray Jesus we read, **“As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered him”** and he betrays Christ to his death.
 - But do you remember when Jesus predicted that Peter would betray him. What did he say? **“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.”**
 - There was absolutely no question that after Peter denied Jesus those three times that he would repent and he would be restored.

Why was there no question? Jesus had interceded on his behalf.
Jesus had prayed for him.

- Now answer this question: what is Jesus doing in heaven right now? One thing he is doing is interceding on behalf of his people. Old Testament priests died and so their work of prayer ended. But not Jesus. He is the final and ultimate priest.
 - Heb 7:23-25 says, **(SHOW SLIDE 25)** **“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.”**

TWO EXAMPLES OF CHRIST’S PRESENT INTERCESSION

- **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 26)** This is so important for your life. First, you must remember Christ’s present intercession for you when you feel the guilt of sin crushing you.
 - Put yourself in the moment. You have sinned. The guilt is heavy. When guilt weighs in on us it is our natural reaction to move away from God, like Adam and Even when they hid from God in the garden. We do this because we inherently know that we cannot dwell with a holy God. Listen, what you need in that moment is good news, not advice.
 - Advice will say, “do better next time” but advice cannot cleanse your guilty conscience. When you sin you need news and the news is that Jesus is continually interceding on your behalf.
- When you sin run quickly to I John 2:1, **(SHOW SLIDE 27)** **“My children I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ the righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.”**
 - When you sin, Jesus stands before the Father speaking for you, in your defense saying, **“Father, here are the scars on my hands and feet. You have fully accepted my sacrifice on Barton’s behalf. Remember what I have done that he might not face judgement.”**
 - And the Father says, **“Yes, Son, I sent you to die for him and I fully accept your sacrifice. He is cleansed of guilt.”**
- When the guilt of sin weighs heavy, confess your sin and then run to Romans 8:33 and cry out, **(SHOW SLIDE 28)** **“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”**
 - And then sing as we will in a few minutes: **(SHOW SLIDE 29)**
 - **Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great High Priest whose name is love
Who ever lives and pleads for me**

**My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in heav'n He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart**

CONCLUSION

- **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 30)** This is good news, not good advice. What you cannot do for yourself, God has done for you in the message of Christmas.
 - For the message of Christmas is that Jesus came into this world first to be our final and ultimate prophet. Jesus cured our disease of ignorance by teaching us who we are and who God is.
 - Then the message of Christmas is that Jesus came into this world to be our final and ultimate priest. Jesus cured our disease of guilt and reconciles us to God.
 - Next week we will see that he also came as our king.
- The call is to embrace him as all three. Submit all your thoughts to him as prophet. Call on him to save you as priest. And bow the knee to him as king.