**“Once for All”**

Psalm 126

# Jeremiah 31:7-9

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 10:46-52

Pentecost 22, Oct. 24, 2021

From Hebrews, chapter 7: “We have **such** a high priest (Jesus), Who’s holy innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. **He** has no need, like previous 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**. For a law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the **Word of the Oath (the Promise of God for the Once-for-All Deliverer, the Fulfiller of every law)**, appoints a **Son** who has been made **perfect forever**.”

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

**Bridge**

**May the Lord have mercy on us**. **MERCY** is **different than grace**. It recognizes a problem, is honest about it and **wishes an answer to it**. It sees the future as it would be without it (bleak relative to a dilemma **without intervention**). Mercy gets sought when people know their fate **without it**. Prisoners might **beg for** the mercy of a court before that court passes judgment and punishment upon a convicted crime; a cancer patient might seek it from God upon its sentence, praying He might suspend its effects. From a Biblical sense, “the wages of **sin** is **death**”, and there is “no one righteous; not one”, so the fact of that leaves no room for hope for anyone without mercy. The **inevitable is inevitable** because **sin is sin**. Doctors haven’t been able to alleviate the world of death and the accumulating of wealth hasn’t changed the course of death’s hit, and mercy **gets wanted** **more and more** as mortality (and its reason for it) gets more recognized. The young want for it the least, often, unless medical or social issues **age them beyond their years**, but the old often want for mercy the most unless stubborn or (through the deceiving of themselves of reality) they **take pride in being stupidly “set in their own ways”**. Either the **less mature** or the **stubbornly old**, each buries their heads in sand if mercy is not something honestly sought. Youth think that they’ll live forever (it’s a lie) and the old (inappropriately) think they’ll live forever in the infamy of the memories people may have of their “great deeds upon this earth”, they in the, quote, “better place” they think **God owes them** for their “great deeds upon this earth” or just buried, ceasing to exist **they think** (not believing in the “eternal life” of Heaven or that other place).

**GRACE** is **how that “other place” gets avoided, but not before mercy is sought**. Where **mercy** **removes the bad deserved in the dilemma of sin**, **grace** is the **Good that’s undeserved yet granted immediately after mercy gets sought. It’s a gift, yet only available where it is indeed ONLY AVAILABLE** … and that’s **from God**.

**Text**

**Mercy is so important as a precursor to grace** that **priests** **there have been** to intercede with mercy wherever **its been sought and appreciated**. God Himself has made available **priests** **for the benefit of people**, and **that** for the entire history of the world. Still (and not just before the history got changed 2,000 years ago) priestly offerings of God’s mercy is history even now. And the function of priests hasn’t really changed that much since 2,000 years ago: before and after, mercy still is doled-out through the **shedding of blood**.

Perhaps the greatest error these days is when the priesthood of God’s **medical** industry is the **only one sought** (when the blood that **they deal in** is thought the only and ultimate offer available), and doctors are, way too often, the ultimate and only priest for far too many in this **current age**. One of the ministries that we here respect encourages quite a different thought. Named for it with knowledge of what it truly is, “Mercy Healthcare” of Franklin and Lewisburg tell you themselves that they’re not the ultimate **priest**. They love being **part of God’s priesthood**, but (and here’s what I love about “Mercy Healthcare”): they’re the first ones to tell you that the **Priest anyone should ultimately have and depend upon is** **One Divine Who they all serve-on-behalf-of**. They are **priests** (each one of them), yet they dispense mercy **because-of** and **from** **the blood of the Once for All Priest, Jesus**.

“God, have mercy on me” is the plea from people **smart** in both our Old Testament reading and our Gospel account for today. And **pleas** are not casual **requests**, but **begging and that from an honest awareness of a situation, recognizing the need for help and asking for it from the One Who’s able to**. So, if you’re not one **willing to beg**, then also never hope for the things that grace offers. Because mercy is **first begging**, and where there’s no **plea for mercy**, grace is just a word.

Yet **pleas for mercy from God** get answered with **that and, also, grace**. The Good News / the Gospel from every one of our texts (and the entirety of Scripture) is that **upon our pleas for mercy from God, He answers with** **that then topped-off with grace**. Where everyone **deserves** an eternal death (because we all sin and “if we say that we **have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us**”), **LIFE is able to be had INSTEAD**. **A priest of God offers that (the mercy of forgiveness instead of destruction of sin** … that’s **MERCY**). That offer is doled out as **free gift**, yet **saving** remembering the **price of it** in a gracious (but bloody) sacrifice of the only thing that could work: the sufficient and Once for All blood-shedding of the Divine Son of God.

## Application

**I’m** a priest bestowing **mercy** from the **begging of sins repented of** but, then also, giving **grace** (in the stead and by God’s command letting you **HEAR IT because God wants you to**). **Parents** are merciful and, even, gracious when they, too, stand and act in God’s stead and that-way by His command. What I’m thrilled about is that none of us in this role have blood to, ourselves, shed but only the sufficient **blood of Jesus to proclaim to you** **and** **have its effects delivered to people**. We can (and ought as priests) to forgive for Jesus’ sake as we’ve been forgiven for His sake. Heal as no doctor on earth ever could eternally heal. **SAVE** by instilling Jesus. **We have the effects of the blood of Jesus to BESTOW as priests since Jesus shed His blood so that we can live and also serve by it**. And our kids are not just **better** with that, but **forever blessed in it**, so **deliver Him to them**. Like we should and can, the Great High Priest (Jesus) intercedes with the Heavenly Father **on our behalf**: showing the wounds that killed Him, “holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and (so now) exalted above the heavens”. **Priests deal in blood**, but it is **His** that we deal in. **He was not shy to shed His own. It was sufficient** **and Once for All for all who’d accept that sacrifice as for them**.

In about two chapters Hebrews is going to directly tell us that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” / **no** **MERCY**, then **no** **GRACE**. Bloody dealings are never pleasant and (because of sin) the tasks of priests prior to Jesus’ death were **regularly bloody** (and how unpleasant it would be to face the stench of blood now that regularly as medical personnel do, certainly earning their wages in it regularity). But relative to God’s grace, Jesus made the regularity of **wholesale bloodshed** **His own Once for All**, so **DONE / FINISHED**. He **defeated the continued need for blood** (the cross **empty** of His tattered body, and the tomb of His burial **no longer** holding what it did. His cross and grave are no longer **of** **bloodshed**, but of the **remnants and reminder of His sufficient sacrifice for everyone’s sake for those wanting salvation from it**. Jesus **is alive**, and His **sacrifice Once for All made** **those who seek mercy because of why that happened clean because of it**. ….

As I look at these texts (this portion of Hebrews) delineating Jesus as **alive** and **forever now our High Priest**, I marvel thinking about the alternative. To have to regularly think of shedding blood oneself in order to gain some favor or hope in this life and the next, doing so at one time formally with priestly help back when was, at least, an **ongoing** reminder of the need. Our problem is that we can **take that for granted** and **forget the need (and maybe, even, lose the gift)**. Hebrews is a good reminder of what’s been **bought and fully paid for** (“Once for All”) … but also of the **cost of that: precious Divine bloodshed that we should never forget, but always confess new sins against**. May **our appreciation** be the **LEAST** that we can do. Remember that **GRACE** does abound … but it **abounds only after MERCY**. So “God, be merciful to us”. In +Jesus’ name and for His sake. Amen.