

O God, whose blessed Son, our great High Priest, has entered once for all into the holy places at Your right hand, and ever lives to intercede on our behalf: Help us through His perfect intercession that our unworthiness may always be washed clean by His holy precious blood and our moral deficiencies covered by His robe of perfect righteousness, and thereby we are always found acceptable in Your eternal presence here in time and forevermore. Amen.

The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but [Jesus] holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. 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. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 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. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

In Christ Jesus, our High Priest, who offered Himself a sacrifice for our sin and now ever lives to make intercession for us, dear fellow redeemed:

I will venture a guess that most of you have had a fellow human being intercede for you probably more than once in your life. It may have been a fellow student, coworker, teacher, supervisor, a reference for acceptance into a school, a new hire for a job, or security clearance.

I can remember my second grade teacher, Mrs. Schwartz leaving the classroom for a few minutes and when she returned there was bedlam breaking out among the students. She declared we were all going to have to stay after school. I broke into tears. I had to catch a bus after school and if I missed it I would be stranded or so I thought. I had obeyed her directive to be silent and remain in my seat. A girl by the name of Susan sitting next to me saw I was crying. She raised her hand and told Mrs. Schwartz that I had not spoken a word nor did I leave my desk in her absence. Mrs. Schwartz gave me a dispensation, so that I did not have to stay after school.

All of us have a more significant intercessor than even Susan. You see as sinners we hear the inspired writer of our text warn a few chapters later: "We know Him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a fearful

thing to fall into the hands of the living God." God, our Creator is truly more formidable than Mrs. Schwartz and not even Susan could intercede for us sinners in the time of divine judgment. So our loving God has supplied us with One who can and does: **Our Ever-Living High Priest Always Makes Intercession for Us.**

I

Historically God has His designated intercessors. The patriarchs all made sacrifices in behalf of their families. Abraham interceded for his nephew Lot; Job for his children. Moses, the great prophet of God on many occasions interceded for the children of Israel. David, the great King functioned in priestly ways not only for his family but also for Israel as well. And there were many others.

Aaron and his sons functioned as priests of God for the people and eventually the sons of Levi would comprise the priestly tribe in behalf of the other eleven. But everyone of these were incomplete. Their sacrifices had to be done only after sacrifices were first made for themselves. Their intercessory capability was limited on account of their mortality. So as great as Moses was, even living to be 120 years old, he would in death be replaced by Joshua. All these staunch bold intercessors' mouths were eventually silenced in death.

This point is clearly made in the opening words of our text: "The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but [Jesus] holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever." Certainly God's kindness was found in those appointed priests for His people as they awaited the High Priest's arrival. It was a kind gesture when Susan interceded for me, even though she was among the guilty and would have to stay after school herself! But such are all human intercessors, they have no righteousness of their own.

The High Priest whom God has provided, the one to which all other types pointed, is perfect in every way. This is exactly what you and I need. "it was indeed fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 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."

II

So not only was the sacrifice made for all our sins by this perfect High Priest, He has ascended to the right hand of God the Father, so that as we approach the throne of the heavenly Father, we are heard and are promised blessing upon blessing. Yes, you are a sinner, an abomination to Your Creator God, but your High Priest

stands in your place. Your sin became His sin. He became the abomination for you upon the cross. Your deserved death became His death. These things done by Christ Jesus in your place were declared completely sufficient, because He rose from your death without your sins charged against Him any longer.

You are never caught without Your intercessor actively speaking with His exposed wounds in full view in the courts of heaven. Christ Jesus is alive and the face of the Father always beholds His Son. Since Jesus is God He also comes to us with His grace and forgiveness. Where two or three of us are gathered together in His name, there He is with us forgiving us and granting us life. As His baptized children we are never exposed to divine shame and contempt but are constantly clothed in His righteousness. And where we eat His body and drink His blood He is intimately present with us forgiving us our sins. How can the Father reject us, Jesus' believers, who are united with His Son in all these special ways?

Repeatedly in the revelation which John received from Jesus in regard to heaven and the eternal kingdom, we hear described that in the midst of the throne of God is found the Lamb who is standing as though He had been slain – the wounded Christ, our great High Priest. And even though Satan the great accuser of the people of God in regard to their sin, accuses them – you and me – day and night, we hear in one of the heavenly songs: “they have conquered the great accuser by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony ... Therefore rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them!”

You may not constantly feel the hot heavy breath of the predator breathing down your neck, pursuing you with the threat of eternal death on account of your many sins of thought, word and deed. Yet it is of great comfort to you whenever you are hounded by the barking accusations against you to know that this holy One, your High Priest stands in front of you shielding you from the snarling bared teeth. On account of this holy eternally living intercessor the Father has provided you, there is never a time when the Father's face does not shine upon you, nor does it fail to lift up upon you.

Jesus' ascension to the right hand of the Father was also part of the salvation God has provided us through the person and work of His Son. To have our Creator's face looking downcast upon us on account of our sin would truly be a frightening and discouraging experience. Instead He sees you through His Son, whose wounds in His living hands, feet and side bear witness that all your sins have been paid for and that you have life in His name.

So when you address the Father in Jesus' name, Jesus' prayers for you are being spoken simultaneously as well. As an example listen to the closing of Jesus' high priestly prayer, and be confident in how the Father beholds you in His Son: "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know You, I know You, and these know that You have sent Me. I made known to them Your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them." Because the Father hears Jesus your holy substitutionary intercessor, He hears you. Pray accordingly in Jesus' name. Amen.