

We bow our hearts in prayer: O Lord Jesus, our great High Priest, teach us true obedience to you so that we believe and trust in You alone as the source of eternal salvation. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

One of the blessings of following the Historic Church year in the readings, Graduals, and themes, is that we are able to touch on all the important teachings, or doctrine, of the Bible.

So isn't it interesting that our theme for this *Cantate* Sun., the 5<sup>th</sup> Sun. of Easter, is Sing! Worship.

Wouldn't it imply that our singing, our worship is an important part of your life in Christ.

And Easter is really a great season to be considering this theme,

because who could imagine an Easter Sunday morning without singing, or music?

And since every Sunday is for us a continuation of the celebration and experience of that first Easter,

it is only natural that our Sundays continue the songs, hymns, and canticles of the Christian faith.

Consider then our sermon text in relation to our Sunday theme.

... *We read as follows in Jesus' name:*

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. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by Him who said to Him,

"You are my Son, today I have begotten You";

as He says also in another place,

"You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. <sup>(ESV)</sup>

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.* <sup>(John 17:17)</sup>

Did you hear the word "worship" used in the text?

As you were listening, did you hear any mention of a song?

Actually, you did. 2x to be exact... But perhaps you didn't realize it. They were the two quotes,

**"You are my Son, today I have begotten You";** and

**"You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."**

Do you know where these quotes come from? They come from the Psalms.

In fact, of all the OT books, the Psalms are quoted the most in the New Testament.

Why do you suppose that is?

Well, consider why people usually quote things: they are trying to make and prove a point.

They want to lend credence to their assertion.

But they don't just quote any source; they quote reliable, sound, and true sources.  
It also doesn't hurt if your quote is well known and accepted already.  
So they quote familiar sources.

Consider, as has been noted before, that the Psalms are the hymnbook of the Bible.  
With only 150 of them and singing them frequently at appointed weeks and festivals,  
these songs, these words and their music were imprinted in their minds from an early age.

For those of you who have memorized or sung Luther's *A Mighty Fortress* your whole life,  
it would be as if someone quoted the lines

*"But for us fights the Valiant One, whom God Himself elected."*

You can almost hear those words with their music as they're said, can't you?

And you know immediately who is being spoken about.

And with a little thought, the rest of that verse, if not the whole hymn, comes to mind.

The author to the Hebrews was counting on this.

He didn't just want that one verse to come to mind, but the whole Psalm.

Then the readers would get the context and content for his assertion.

You know what else that tells you about the Psalms then?

Obviously, that the people believed them to be the true word of God.

For us, this is not surprising. We believe this as well.

But it also shows that the Psalms are heavily doctrinal, they are songs of theology.

Consider our text. Two psalms are quoted here: Psalm 2 and Psalm 110.

The author to the Hebrews quotes both of these verses to prove His point,

that **Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest,**

**but was appointed by God... who said to Him**

**"You are my Son, today I have begotten You"; and**

**"You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."**

In the first place, the Father declares that He begot the Son, so the Son of God is true God,

Jesus is not just a creature that has arisen to that Sonship.

And in the second, the Father declares Jesus to a human in the priestly office.

Jesus is able to sympathize with our human weaknesses, yet is without sin. Hebrews 4:15

And He was appointed to the priestly office by the Father,

He did not seek to attain it, this One *"whom God Himself elected."*

These ideas are not fluffy marshmallows of theological thoughts,  
ear candy to be quickly digested and forgotten.

These are meaty doctrinal concepts cut into bitesize poetic phrases

to be heard, sung, marked, and inwardly digested throughout the week and one's life,  
your whole life, from infancy to elderly.

Should we be surprised then when the bulk of the hymns we sing together are meatier hymns?

As we gather once a week, of the 100s of 1,000s of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs out there,

we do not try to sing them all, nor would we.  
Many are poison, containing flagrant heresies, false teachings.  
Many are little dainties that sound nice, but carry little spiritual value.  
And some, while they may not have false doctrine and have spiritual value,  
we simply can't put them all into one book and expect our people to learn them all.  
The Hebrews had 150 psalms, we have 602 hymns in the hymnary and even after 23 years,  
every now and then we are still introduced to hymns with which we are unfamiliar.

Some hymns are more difficult to become familiar with. It's true.  
But it is also true that hymns that are easily learned are often easily forgotten;  
and those learned with effort are those long cherished. This is true for our school children, too.  
The hymns they memorize in their curriculum are hymns for them to grow into, not out of,  
for them to memorize and use, so that they may meditate on them even in older years.

But even that statement should be refined a little more.  
It's not that we want people to meditate on the hymns as an end in itself.  
Instead, we want them to meditate on the content of the hymns,  
which leads to the most important point about the Psalms and our hymns: they are about Jesus.  
They are His songs, from Him, about Him, sung by Him, sung of Him, and sung to Him.

This is also demonstrated in our text as the author to the Hebrews teaches us about the greater-ness  
of NT priesthood of Christ over and above the OT Aaronic-priestly types, or pictures, of Christ.  
He is explaining how the OT priests served the people, how they mediated for them by sacrifices,  
were able to deal gently with the ignorant and erring because they themselves were sinners.  
He is teaching them that God would not accept just anyone in the priestly office,  
but only those that He had appointed,... and this culminating in Jesus.  
Jesus was not a priest descended from Aaron's line, but was a priest like Melchizedek,  
who was declared and appointed directly by God... and to a greater office.

As a priest, Jesus desired to mediate for God's people.  
As a priest His duty was to take away their sin (and the sins of the whole world) by sacrifice.  
In Jesus' case, that sacrifice would be with His own body and blood.  
He prayed fervently in the Garden of Gethsemane to His heavenly Father.                      human  
With **loud cries and tears** even, so great was His devotion both to the Father & His ^ brothers.  
We are told that the Father answered His prayers and saved Him from death.  
The Evangelists report that He prayed that the cup of death might pass from Him,  
that if there was another way to save the world, that He might follow through with that.  
Hebrews tells us that **He was heard by the Father**, meaning He answered Jesus affirmatively.  
And yet we know that Jesus did indeed die, remember, "*for us fights the Valiant One.*"  
But remember also how the righteous Son **learned obedience through what He suffered.**  
And that the Son also earnestly prayed, **not my will but Thine be done.**

His death on the cross was the Father's will, as prophesied in the Psalms and elsewhere in the OT.  
But it was also His will and ability to save Jesus (and you) from death by raising Him to life again.  
Jesus' work of redemption **being made perfect**, that is having come to completion on the cross,  
He is now **the source of eternal salvation**; the priest through whom all are redeemed forever.

You, dear Christian, **who obey Him** are the beneficiaries of His great work and priestly office.  
“To obey Him, namely Jesus, means above all to believe in Him,  
to yield to Him the obedience of faith” <sup>(Lenski)</sup> imparted by the Holy Spirit.

This obedience is aided in the singing of hymns which first and foremost teach you correctly about Him and the Triune God and His work in creating, redeeming, and sanctifying you. Your faith is aided by hymns that put meaty bits of theology on your tongue and in your heart which are easy to remember and to be meditated upon. Your faith is aided by hymns that reverently convey the humble, trusting attitudes of God’s people toward the Almighty God and their brother, Jesus Christ.

So let us sing! The sweet words of Jesus to you in the last two stanzas of our chief hymn, that the Gospel may strengthen and dwell with you in memorable verse.

He is risen!

**C: He is risen indeed!**

Alleluia!

Soli Deo Gloria