



Hebrews 7:24-28

24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.

25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

26 Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

28 For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Special Music: “Great High Priest”

Cameron Keith

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jr4ckWuMpM>

LONG DAY FOR THE PASTOR

Reverend Chuck stared at the empty page on his computer screen. He had arrived early knowing that he needed to get to work on his sermon for the week, but an hour later he had still managed to write nothing. Danielle, the church secretary, had arrived not long after he had. She had made a pot of coffee and started in on dealing with the church email and unopened letters. Reverend Chuck was not allowed to make the coffee. He always made it too weak, and Danielle had scolded him more than once insisting that he allow her to make the coffee. He didn't put up much of a fight, although he hated it when he came in earlier than her and had to wait.

The coffee cup on his desk was almost empty but the jolt of energy had failed to bring words to his page. "Good job with the coffee this morning, Danielle," he shouted through the doorway into the church office.

"Thank you, Pastor. Do you need a refill?" came Danielle's voice back to him.

"Yeah, but I can get it," he called back.

He rose from his chair, picked up his 'We love our Pastor' cup and started towards the coffee pot in the kitchen. Chuck glanced at the clock on the wall. It was 9:30 already. "Wait," he thought, "I was supposed to be at the hospital in San Antonio at 10:30."

"Danielle! I'm headed out to visit Jason Williams and Dancer. I totally forgot! I'll be back after while!"

“Be safe, pastor,” Danielle called out, knowing full well that she probably would not see him for the rest of the day.

Jason Williams had broken his leg in a tractor incident the week before. The doctors at the County Hospital in Rusksville had done their best to set the bone properly, but the nature of the break made that difficult with the equipment and staff they had there. So, they had shipped him off to San Antonio to get the leg set by an orthopedic surgeon.

One of the problems with serving in Parable was the remote nature of services when they were needed. It was over an hour drive to the hospital. He made a few phone calls while he was driving, but mostly he thought about the sermon that he had yet to get started on. He knew that God would provide him with what he needed but he was always a little fretful when deadlines were approaching.

Traffic was bad due to road construction on the highway, so it took him almost two hours to reach Jason’s room. The boy was sleeping, and Dancer was watching the football game on the television in the room. As Chuck entered the room, the farmer stood up to shake his hand and greet him. Dancer turned the audio down on the TV. “Thanks so much for coming, pastor. It means a lot that you are here.”

“How’s Jason doing?” Chuck queried, still clutching Dancer’s right hand.

“He’s mostly been sleeping,” Dancer replied. They did the surgery yesterday, but it took them longer than they thought it would. Jason is still woozy

from the anesthesia. They put him on pain killers this morning. They let me know that the break wasn't clean, and it is going to take some time for him to heal. He won't be doing any farm work for a while."

"How about you, Dancer," Chuck asked. "How are you holding up? I know you haven't left his side."

"Well, I talked with Katie Callaway and she and her daughters are making sure the animals get fed. The docs said we should be able to go home before the weekend. But there is so much to do, and I don't see how I'm going to be able to get it done and look after Jason at the same time."

"Get me a list of what needs to be done, Dancer," Chuck reassured him. "I will see what kind of help I can round up."

"Absolutely not pastor. I'll manage somehow."

"Get me the list, Dancer. I can't promise you we can get it all done, but hopefully we can take a load off your plate and give you some breathing room," said Chuck. "After all, that's what we're all here for, isn't it? To help each other?"

"Well, thank you pastor. I appreciate it."

Chuck took out his notepad and started writing down the list of things that needed to be done on Dancer's farm. It was a fairly long list. But then, it had been a week since Dancer had been home.

Jason was still asleep, but Chuck prayed with dancer, and then took his leave. As he started to exit the building through the emergency room door, a

nurse ran up behind him and gently touched him on the shoulder.

“Please, pastor, I could use your help,” said the nurse. Chuck glanced at her name tag which read Cindy. Most of the staff at the hospital knew who he was from his frequent visits, so he wasn’t really surprised that Cindy would approach him.

“Of course, Cindy. How can I help you?”

“This is a little awkward, pastor, but we just had a young man brought into the emergency room after a motorcycle accident. It doesn’t look like he’s going to make it. The police checked his wallet and he’s a student at the university, but his family lives in New York. We’ve already notified them, but we don’t think he will live long enough for them to get here. He’s in a coma so he hasn’t asked for anyone. There’s really nothing more we can do for him. I just don’t think he should die alone, pastor.”

“No. We can’t have that, Cindy. Please show me to his room.”

“Another thing you should know, pastor, is that he is Muslim,” Cindy said, half expecting Chuck to change his mind.

“That doesn’t matter, Cindy. Please take me to him now,” said Chuck without a second thought.

When the pastor entered the room, it became obvious that the boy wouldn’t be able to survive much longer. IVs with tubes, wire connections, machines chirping and pinging were tangled and strewn about his bed. The boy couldn’t have been much more than eighteen. Chuck pushed a few of the machines back

and pulled a chair up next to the bed. He sat down, took the boys hand in his and began to pray for the boy and his family. Ten minutes later, the boy passed. Nurses and attendants entered the room and began to disconnect the machines and IVs. The pastor moved his chair out of the way to give them more room, said another prayer which also included the nurses and attendants that had been doing their best to save the boys life. With a heavy heart, he held Cindy's hand in his as she thanked him for being there. Slowly, he exited the building.

As long as he was in San Antonio, he visited with Jane Grautmeyer, John Grautmeyer's mother, who was a life-long member of the church but was now living in assisted living in the city. And then he stopped at the rest home to talk to Meagan Carmichal, the new administrator, whom he had known before he had come to Parable. She was struggling in her new position and still trying to raise the standards that had been neglected by her predecessor. He felt that he should run by the Christian Church where his friend Rev Pete Witmeyer was serving, but time was running short and it was a long drive back.

Chuck arrived back at the church, just in time for 6:00 choir practice. Only when his stomach started to sing bass right along with him did he remember that he hadn't eaten lunch or dinner. That was pretty embarrassing and the alto section in front of him was none too pleased with the additional gurgles as well.

He gave his son Matt a call who was just wrapping up a plumbing issue over at the Methodist Church and asked him to join him for a late dinner at Daisy's Diner. Daisy was trying to clean up when he walked in, but she still had some pot roast left and served him and Matt a big bowl with Texas toast, never

mentioning to the pastor how late it was and how tired she was. Myron, her son, was in the back washing dishes for her but as much as she wanted to get home, she noticed how worn out the pastor seemed. It must have been a long day for him. With a smile, she brought the pastor and Matt some coffee and a couple of pieces of pie.

Once they had finished eating, Chuck and Matt helped Daisy finish cleaning up before they left. It was after 10 when the pastor pulled into his driveway. It had been a pretty normal day for the pastor of First Community Church, and he knew that tomorrow would be much the same. He was still a little keyed up, probably from the coffee. The weary pastor sat down at his desk and pulled out his notebook. He began making a list of the people that he would call the next day who might be willing to help Dancer with the things that he needed to have done. This was a great community when it came to helping each other, but sometimes they needed a little encouragement and possibly an invitation.

Having finished with his note to himself, Chuck considered going to bed, but instead, he turned on his computer, pulled up his word processor and stared at the empty page that would eventually be his sermon for Sunday. He put on a pot of coffee knowing that it would be a while before he would be able to rest.

For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

This story today about Pastor Chuck could be the story of just about every pastor and priest I know. As pastors, we struggle every day to be more like Jesus and meet the needs of the people around us, to lift them up. Most pastors won't talk about how exhausted they get. They don't want their congregations to worry. And, I am one that has to admit, there is a little bit of stubbornness and pride sandwiched in there as well. As much as we encourage self-care for others, we are often the worst ones to do this for ourselves.

You see, we want to be like Jesus. We want to please him and give our time, energy, and experience to our congregations. We have a difficult time saying 'NO' to anyone and when we do, we often feel guilty. After all, Jesus didn't hesitate to help anyone at any time. We forget that even Jesus had to get away once in a while to rest and recharge.

There is a wonderfully tearful clip from Jesus Christ Superstar when Jesus is overwhelmed by people needing his help. Pastors are often overwhelmed these days as the world descends farther and farther into chaos. It can be soul-crushing. And Ministers are leaving the church in record numbers because of the stress and pressure.

Again, I say, we want to be like Jesus. We are privileged to share in his priesthood. But the truth is, we are not Jesus. We want to always be his hands

and feet in this world, but we are trapped in these mortal coils. We strive in every way to emulate Jesus, but we are faulty, sinful creatures. We make mistakes. We sometimes say the wrong things. We sometimes fail to meet the needs of the people we encounter. We struggle to reach a level of perfection that we will never be able to reach. But knowing that doesn't stop us as we continually pray for the strength and stamina to do all that is expected of us.

And it bothers us deeply when we fall short. It hurts us when we get sick and cannot preach on Sunday, or make it to choir practice, or teach Bible Study, or visit those who are shut-in or in the hospital.

I don't say any of this to generate pity for pastors, because most pastors love what they do and would not consider doing something else. We count ourselves privileged to serve our Lord in the capacity of pastor, preacher, and priest. To borrow from the movie Jerry Mcquire, "It completes us."

We have been walking through Hebrews the last few weeks and have been talking about Jesus as the High Priest and what that means. I want to read our scripture for today again, now that we have a little context.

24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.

25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

26 Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

28 For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

God has appointed Jesus as the High Priest in the Order of Melchizedek. He is our example. He is our guideline. He is the measurer of our merit. He doesn't have to offer sacrifices because he is the sacrifice, the unblemished and perfect lamb, the savior of all humankind, unequaled by any person of flesh and blood. So, while we, and that means all of us, are able to serve as priests in this world because of the law, Jesus is appointed to the priesthood by the oath, the bonding of the spirit, the sacrifice for all of us which occurred after the law.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:17

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

The law that allows each of us as Christians to become a part of the priesthood, is fulfilled through Christ Jesus. He becomes our mediator and High Priest. The example to which we desire to attain. The filter for our actions and our voices in a world cluttered with pain and distress as souls seek to find their place in the presence of their Creator.

As I seek the next place God would have me serve, I read the expectations of congregations. “Someone who teach on Sunday. Someone who will lead Bible Study. Someone who will visit the sick. Someone who will be involved in the community. Someone who will lead prayer services. Someone who will bring vision to the church.” Those are all good things. But in complete candor, those are things that God expects from all of his children, not just the pastors and priests. And one might reply, “Well, we expect the pastor to better at those things. He should represent the church. In other words, he should be a better Christian than us.” That’s a pretty tall order in a world where we have hundreds of denominations that can’t completely agree on a definition of what it means to be a Christian.

Let me be perfectly honest with you here. Pastors, just like every follower of Jesus Christ, have God-given talents, tools if you will, that will serve in the ministry of the church. And no two pastors are alike. And no pastor is above their congregation, for each one is called to serve their congregation as Jesus provides for them to do so.

So, what is the difference between a Christian and a pastor? Please indulge me as I give you my understanding of the difference. I firmly believe that Christ sets pastors in positions to be examples for their congregations. Men and women, who by the grace of God, are privileged serve the people around them, as Christ served the people during his time on earth. Not all of us are great speakers. Not all of us are great musicians. Not all of us are perfect in our prayers. A pastor should not be a surrogate for their congregation in the

community but should be accountable for their actions as servants in their community. Ministers should always have one very important common element. Pastors should love the people that they serve, just as Jesus loves them.

Preachers do not belong on a pedestal. They should be grounded in humility. Our constant goal should be to become better foot washers, and by doing so, showing our congregations the meaning of what Christ's teaches us about being servants. As ministers, our lives should ever point toward the glory of the cross and resurrection, not our own feeble attempts to example the perfection of Christ Jesus.

Jesus is the perfect example of what it means to live a Christian life, and even ministers don't come close in comparison. If we lead, our goal is to lead others into a better understanding of their relationship with the Creator of the Universe, his Son, Jesus Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The pastor or priest should love the flock entrusted to him to the point that he or she would die for them, and at the very least, live a life of example for them.

For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

God bless you all.

Amen

Copyright © 2024 Rev. Walt Wellborn

Scripture references provided under copyright by:

**THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION©, NIV© Copyright © 1973,
1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. © Used by permission. All rights reserved
worldwide.**