

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Epistle

GOD'S GIFT TO HUMANKIND: JESUS Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost Hebrews 5:1-10 Analysis by Lori A. Cornell

1 Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; 3 and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. 4 And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

5 So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

*“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;
6 as he says also in another place,
“You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.”*

7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus* offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; 9 and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who

obey him, 10 having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

DIAGNOSIS: No Good

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – “God’s Gift”

Notoriety (call it “glory,” if you’d like) is the name of the game in our media-saturated, fame-drunk culture. We’ll take attention however we can get it—negative or positive; any attention is good attention. So we grab for honor, rather than wait for it to be bestowed (counter v. 4). And, despite the fact that we’d never want to be treated so, we treat others ruthlessly with our words and deeds (counter v. 2).

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Ignorant and Wayward*

Even we Christians make little room for the ignorant and wayward (v. 2) in our grasp for glory. But when it comes to “things pertaining to God” we (the “priesthood” of all believers, if you will) are called to deal with other humans gently. But we are disinclined to deal with weakness so gingerly. And by our very actions we prove ourselves to be the very ignorant and wayward louses we loathe; we are weak people in need of a proper sacrifice. Not only that, but we fail to recognize Jesus as the one human worthy to deal with our human sin.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *No Sacrifice Good Enough*

Instead, we put ourselves at the altar as high priest over our own lives, and offer God our unworthy sacrifices. “Unworthy sacrifices” because we do not honor the True Priest’s calling to “offer gifts and sacrifices for sin” on our behalf (v. 1). Unworthy because we rob the High Priest, that is, Jesus, of his rightful status. Whatever sacrifices we might offer, they are

not good enough, because we are not good enough to offer them.

PROGNOSIS: Good Enough

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – High Priest and Sacrifice

Jesus is good enough though. In fact, his reverent submission of himself as sacrifice (v. 7c), and his obedience (v. 8), make him the source of our salvation (v. 9)—despite our dishonor. Surprisingly, this One who is both High Priest and sacrifice is able to be both priest and sacrifice for us because he is both God's Son (v. 5b) and human flesh (v. 7). He sacrifices his honor by accepting an inglorious death, and he redeems his honor by the very same act. By his perfect trust in God's purpose, he deals gently with our weakness—our ignorance and waywardness (v. 2), so that we may gain honor with God.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – Obeying Him

Such sacrifice on our behalf is awesome and humbling. Humbling enough to make us drop to our knees in gratitude and fear. How incredible that we have a Priest who not only performs the sacrifice but actually is the sacrifice! How terribly wonderful that his dishonor gains us honor. It's enough to make us want to offer up songs of repentance and praise: "This is God's Son, our priest forever."

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – God's Gift

Jesus' priesthood over us gives us new perspective on our on our relationship to God. It also changes the way we see ourselves in relationship to the rest of the world. No longer do we see ourselves as "God's gift" to the world; instead, we are recipients of God's gifts—gifts we are meant to share humbly. And, knowing the gift of Christ's sacrifice, we gladly share from our hands, hearts, and heads. We offer ourselves to the world, and deal gently with the world's weakness, hoping that maybe—just maybe—others will see God's greater Gift through us.