

Text: Hebrews 5:1-10

Theme: A Priestly Sacrifice

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

My dear beloved flock, as well as those watching online, the text for our meditation this morning is the Epistle lesson of Hebrews chapter five, verses one through ten.

Good morning boys and girls how are you doing today? Good? Excellent! We just sang, "Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain, could give the guilt conscience peace or wash away the stain." Today we are going to be talking about a serious topic. We are going to be talking about the blood and death of atonement. Do anyone of you know what the word atonement means? Atonement means to seek reparations for a wrong or injury done to you. For example, let's say someone hits you really hard or they are mean to you. They realize that what they did was bad and they come to you with a bar of chocolate asking for forgiveness. That offering of the bar of chocolate is them asking for atonement, for forgiveness. What would you do? I pray that you would forgive them, even without an atonement. In our text for today, we hear about how Jesus with loud cries and tears, makes atonement for us by being our sacrifice by taking our punishment upon the Cross. Yet, Jesus is also something else, what is that? Let me know after service. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

For atonement to be made, there must be both a party that is wronged as well as a party that has done the wrong. Who are these parties? The author of Hebrews is clear, the wronged party is God and those that have done the wrong are the Jewish people, as well as ourselves. God has been wronged by the constant sins of the people. As a holy and just God, He cannot dwell in and amidst sinners. Thus, God established through Moses, the offering of the sacrifices of the covenant. Whenever the people sinned, they were to bring a bull, sheep, goat, dove, or pigeon, lay their hands on it as a symbolic way of taking personal responsibility for their sins, and sacrifice it to God. This was a bloody mess, done by the priests. The animal died instead of the people themselves dying. The blood of the animal purifies the person offering it from both sin and uncleanness. Once a year, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the High priest would go into the Holy of Holies, the place where the ark of the covenant was, and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on his behalf as well as on behalf of the entirety of Israel. That is a lot of sacrifices and a lot of blood spilled, roughly ten gallons for a single bull.

Could you imagine doing that today? In a total year, adding up all of the sacrifices that the Law required, would be 1246 animals on behalf of the nation, not including the personal sacrifices made by the individual or families. Thanks be to God that we do not have to do that any longer. No matter how much blood we shed, we would not even come close to the amount needed for the forgiveness of every single one of our sins. Every time we lied, cheated, stole, talked back to mom and dad, thought that we knew better than those in authority over us, put other things or people in the place of God. A lot of blood would have to be spilt. We do not have to shed the blood of beasts because the blood of Jesus Christ was shed on our behalf. Jesus, God in the flesh for us, became our sacrifice. He died on the Cross, bearing all of your sins, my sins, the sins of the whole world, in His holy flesh. There on the cross, He made full atonement for us.

Jesus made full atonement for us, not only by being a sacrifice for us upon the cross, but also as our great High Priest. He is Himself the victim and the priest. It is the role of the High Priest, not only to

intercede between a holy God and sinful humanity, but also to be able to identify with the people. To know them and identify with them. This as well is our Lord. Jesus knows well our weaknesses and sins, having borne them in His holy flesh. Jesus identifies with us as one of us. When we do not know where to turn and it seems as though no one understands, Jesus does. Jesus has been there and done that. He knows our struggles. He identifies with our pain and grief. Jesus knows all of our weaknesses, all of our shame, guilt, betrayal, loss, sadness, grief, mourning, and heartaches. He knows all of the darkness that springs forth from our hearts into our thoughts, words, deeds, and actions. Jesus knows all of this, and yet He still dies for you. Because of Jesus, you are forgiven. By His perfect obedience to the will of the Father, by His suffering, bleeding, and dying, Jesus has won for you salvation and life eternal with Him now and forever.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.