Good Friday — Hebrews 7:26-28
April 2, 2021 — 748*-113-110/118-319
*CW-S – "Lamb of God"

May Christ the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us and grant us His peace. Amen.

Christ Crucified – "He Meets Our Needs"
I. He meets our need for a perfect priest.
II. He meets our need for a perfect sacrifice.

Dear Christian friends,

Our Lenten journey has been leading us here **ever since** we first set out. We're at that hill just outside the **walls** of Jerusalem – the hill called ***"Golgotha"*** – ***"Calvary"*** in Latin – ***"the place of the skull."*** We see three crude crosses – **each** with a condemned man **hanging** on it. But it's the Man on the **center cross** who is THE CENTER of attention. The sign above His head reads, ***"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."***

We've been here MANY TIMES before. The sights – the sounds – are **so familiar**. But today we GO BACK and take another **look**. Yes, look closely and TAKE IT ALL IN. Those nails pounded through His hands and feet. His back bloody and **raw** from a **vicious scourging**. His body bruised and **battered**. The ***"crown of thorns."*** The blood. There is SO MUCH blood – blood everywhere. Blood from His hands – His **feet** – His **back** – His **head**. Blood still trickling from **His side**. Blood staining His cross – blood soaking into the **ground beneath** Him. Jesus is now dead – His body hangs LIMP and **lifeless** on His cross. Do YOU SEE all this – **see** JESUS on His cross?

"Christ crucified" is not a PRETTY SIGHT yet we need to see this. We need EXACTLY THIS – ***"Christ crucified."*** That's the point of these verses. ***"Christ crucified"*** MEETS OUR NEED 1)for a **perfect** priest and 2)for a **perfect** sacrifice.

I. He meets our need for a perfect priest.

This **letter** was written to **Jewish** Christians who were being persecuted for their faith. They were weakening in their faith. Was it really WORTH IT to be a Christian? Was it **worth** the ridicule? Was it **worth** losing their jobs – **losing** their homes – **even** losing their LIVES? **Maybe** it's NOT SO GREAT being a Christian. **Maybe** they should just give up on Jesus and go back to their **old Jewish** way of life. That would certainly make life a LOT EASIER for them.

This letter was written to counter **such thinking**. It's not a BUMMER being a Christian – it's the GREATEST THING in the world despite all the **hassles** and **hardships** that might come with it. Being a Christian MEANS YOU HAVE Jesus and there's nothing better than that. Nothing CAN TOP **having Jesus** as your Savior. Jesus meets our needs – INCLUDING our need for a perfect priest.

These **Hebrew Christians** were very familiar with the ROLE of the priest. So much of OT worship centered around the **priest offering** sacrifices. **So much** of OT worship was worship using PICTURE LANGUAGE. I like to compare it to **our having** stained-glass windows. Those windows aren't just meant to be PRETTY. They're there to TEACH and REMIND us of important biblical truths and **stories**. SO IT WAS with the priests in the OT.

In the OT ONLY the descendants of Aaron, Moses' brother, were allowed to be priests. ONLY the priests were allowed to offer the sacrifices. In the temple proper there were TWO SPECIAL ROOMS called ***"The Holy Place"*** and ***"The Most Holy Place."*** The ***"Most Holy Place"*** picture God dwelling among His people. That ***"Most Holy Place"*** was OFF LIMITS to **everybody** including the priests.

ONLY the **high priest** was allowed in there and ONLY ON the great ***"Day of Atonement"*** and ONLY IF he came with blood from a sacrifice as we heard in the OT reading.

What was all that PICTURING? What was **God** trying to teach His people? There are several BIG LESSONS. **One** is that God sets the TERMS of our relationship with Him. He's God, we're not. **Two**, there were MAJOR PROBLEMS in our relationship with our Creator. God is ***"holy."*** God will accept NOTHING LESS than holy and we are ANYTHING BUT holy. We were born sinners. We have hearts corrupted through and through. We have a sinful nature that CAN'T STAND God – that sees God as the ENEMY. **According** to our sinful natures we're better off WITHOUT GOD in our lives.

Lesson three – for us sinners **to have** a GOOD RELATIONSHIP with God we need a MEDIATOR – **someone** to go between – to make peace between – **someone** to STRAIGHTEN things out between God and us. That was the job of the priest.

None of those **OT priests** was the PERFECT priest. **All** of them were sinners themselves. BEFORE they could offer sacrifices ***"for the sins of the people"*** they ***"had to first offer sacrifices for their own sins."*** NOT ONLY THAT they could never bring the PERFECT SACRIFICE. ***"Day after day"*** they kept sacrificing ***"for their own sins and for the sins of the people."*** All those OT priests PICTURED FOR the people and reminded them of GOD'S PROMISE to one day send the PERFECT **priest** who would bring the PERFECT **sacrifice.**

God kept that promise WHEN HE SENT His own **eternal Son** to us. Jesus meets our need for a PERFECT priest because He ACTUALLY IS **perfect**. ***"This is certainly the kind of high priest we needed: one who is holy, innocent, pure, separated from sinners."*** Notice how the writer PILES ON the words – ***"holy, innocent, pure, separated from sinners."*** "Conceived by the Holy Spirit and **born** of the virgin Mary" God's Son was born a **true man** but without a **sinful nature**. FROM WHATEVER ANGLE you look at Jesus' life **it's perfect**. Jesus lived among sinners **every day** but He never followed their **sinful ways**. Jesus never used THEIR SINS as an excuse for Him to **go sin**. In every area of His life – every minute of His life – Jesus gave His heavenly Father PERFECT OBEDIENCE coupled with a **perfect** LOVE for and a **perfect** TRUST in His Father. **Jesus** lived that **perfect life** FOR US and IN our place.

Now it was time for our PERFECT PRIEST to bring…

II. The perfect sacrifice.

Go back to those IMPERFECT OT priests with their IMPERFECT **sacrifices**. God was VERY PICKY about those sacrifices. **Again**, God was teaching His people some VERY IMPORTANT lessons.

God insisted that ONLY PERFECT animals **could be sacrificed** – no bumps, bruises, broken bones were allowed. You didn't dare offer God a **half-dead** animal - one that wouldn't bring you anything at the market. God demanded THE BEST. That was another reminder that WE OWED God a **perfect** life. But instead of BEING PERFECT people we've sinned – and sin has its CONSEQUENCES.

You brought your **perfect animal** to the priest and then what happened? You put your hands on the animal's head and the priest then took it from you and SLIT its throat **wide open**. The NOW DEAD animal was sacrificed on the altar – its still warm blood poured **at the base** of the altar. Sacrificing those animals ***"day after day"*** at the temple was a DIRTY – MESSY – DEADLY business.

Do you see what God was TEACHING His people? We like to shrug off our sins with a **"no big deal."** We have all kinds of EXCUSES for our sins. "So I don't always HAVE TIME for God – so I sometimes PUSH God off to the side in my life – I know I shouldn't DRINK so much – shouldn't check those porn sites on the internet – I know I should be nicer to my sister – I should do a BETTER JOB at school/work – BUT… - God will JUST HAVE to **understand.**" With all those **dead** animals God made clear that

ANYTHING LESS than perfect obedience is UNACCEPTABLE – period! ***"The soul that sins, it shall die. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."***

Do you see how all those IMPERFECT **priests** with their imperfect sacrifices were **in fact** the PERFECT PICTURE of today – the **perfect picture** of ***"Christ crucified"*** – our perfect priest - our **perfect** sacrifice?

All those animals sacrificed in the OT were INNOCENT. They had done nothing wrong. They didn't deserve to die. Yet what happened? Those INNOCENT animals died IN THE PLACE of the **guilty** people. The innocent animal PAID FOR the **people's sin**. The animal died – the people lived – they were FORGIVEN.

Isn't that what today is **all about**? BEHOLD our perfect priest bringing the **perfect sacrifice** – HIMSELF! Jesus – ***"who knew no sin"*** – took the blame for the sins of the whole world and was punished in our place. Today we hear the INNOCENT Jesus cry out, ***"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*** That's what we deserved because of our sins – God TURNING HIS BACK on us for all time and **for eternity**. God pouring out **on us** His HOLY anger at our UNHOLY lives. Yet it's the INNOCENT Jesus ***"forsaken"*** on the cross – dead on the cross! ***"He was pierced for our transgressions; crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brings us peace was on Him."*** All that blood at the cross – that's ***"the blood of God's Son that cleanses us from all sin."***

"Such a high priest meets our need. He sacrificed for sins ONCE FOR ALL when He offered Himself." Don't overlook that ***"once for all."*** Jesus' perfect sacrifice means a PERFECT FORGIVENESS of all sins for **all people**. That INCLUDES you and me with all our sin and guilt. All our sins were **all** PAID IN FULL that **first Good Friday** when Jesus died.

With that perfect sacrifice comes a PERFECT SALVATION. ***"Today you will be with Me in paradise,"*** Jesus promised that **repentant** criminal. That man would die a MOST MISERABLE death – a death hastened when a soldier smashed his legs with **some sort** of a sledgehammer. It was not a PRETTY WAY to die! But he had Jesus' promise – ***"Today – with Me – in paradise."*** His last hours on earth would **be so wretched** but in just a FEW MORE HOURS he would join Jesus in heaven's eternal glory. WHAT COMFORT! What GRACE!

We too have **Jesus' promise** that when we die TRUSTING in Him we will immediately join Him in His heavenly glory. ONLY Jesus can make AND KEEP that promise. Jesus has made that promise and He DOES KEEP it!

"Christ crucified" – our perfect priest – our **perfect** sacrifice. There is ONE FINAL difference between Jesus and those **imperfect** OT priest with their **imperfect** sacrifices. EVERY ONE of those priests died and stayed dead. **Every one** of those animals died and stayed dead. **Today** Jesus DIED – but we have His promise, ***"On the third day I will be raised to life."*** See you on Sunday! Amen.

LUTHER'S EXPLANATION TO THE 2nd ARTICLE