

Text: Heb. 5:5-10

Title: "How Christ became high priest"

Time: 1/4/2015 pm

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Have you ever had anyone ask you how you happened to become a member of this church? I have been asked that. As I look back on my life, I see many things along the way that had to happen in order for me to be a member of this church, let alone a pastor here. All those happenings are God's gracious providences. Well, Christ is the high priest of our church, and the passage we have come to this evening tells us how it happened in the providence of God that Christ became our high priest. Notice with me three themes in this regard.

I. Christ became high priest through God's appointment (vv. 5-6).

Illustration: I read for the first time this past week about a phenomenon called a *micronation*. A micronation is a group of people who decide that they want to become a nation of their own. Many of them have their own flag, national anthem, currency, holidays, stamps, and even passports. Evidently, most of the mother-countries in which these micronations exist tolerate their existence until the people of a micronation try to stop paying taxes to the mother country. I can imagine micronational militias would present a problem. The leader of a micronation is typically a self-appointed benevolent dictator of some kind.

Application: The author of Hebrews wants us to think about the fact that Christ was no self-appointed, self-glorifying high priest. He quotes two Old Testament passages to remind us that Christ became high priest through

God's appointment. The first tells us in what sense Christ did not glorify himself (v. 5b from Ps. 2:7) and the second in what sense Christ became a priest (v. 6 from Ps. 110:4). Let's look at these in some detail.

1. Christ did not glorify himself becoming our high priest because He was the Son of God (v. 5). For me to be a part of this church is a great step up for me. I am by nature a sinner who is not worthy to come through those doors into this assembly without the walls falling down on top of me.

For the Son of God, however, to be a part of this church was a great step down. The day referred to in the phrase, "Today have I begotten thee," is the day that Peter spoke of in Acts 2:31-36, the first Easter Sunday. Paul spoke of that same day in Rom. 1:3-4, and he tied the resurrection to Ps. 2:7 in Acts 13:29-37. It is important for us to see this evening that Christ was declared the begotten Son of God at His resurrection. Prior to that, of course, He suffered death on the cross for us. So for Christ, becoming high priest was a great step down before it was a step up.

He did that for us. So now we know how it was that Christ glorified not Himself. He took a step down to be appointed the high priest of this church. He went to the cross and died before he was risen and "begotten" or publicly honored and announced as God's Son. Should serving him faithfully as a member of His church be something that we view as beneath us?

2. Christ became a high priest who is eternal and universal (v. 6). We will learn the significance of the order of Melchizedek in the coming chapters of Hebrews, but for now let's go back to Genesis and familiarize ourselves again with this

biblical character we read about in chapter 14 of that book (vv. 13-20).

Why is Christ a priest after the order of Melchizedek and not after the order of Levi, Abraham's great-grandson? The answer is twofold: (1) that Christ's priesthood is eternal, not temporary – His eternal ministry in our lives is the key to our eternal salvation (vv. 6, 9); and (2) Christ's priesthood is universal, not Jewish – His ministry is the key to eternal life for everyone ("all"; v. 9).

Who says so? God does. Christ became high priest through God's appointment. He is God's only way to have our sins forgiven and to be right with Him. Have you received Christ the God-appointed eternal high priest? Without Him, you cannot have eternal life (1 Tim. 2:5).

II. Christ became high priest through sufferings (vv. 7-8).

Illustration: Our family spent a wonderful Christmas holiday together. It was great to meet my new nephew and to reconnect with my brother and sisters and their families. It was good to see Mom and Dad again, although it was also plain to me that Mom's struggle with dementia is getting worse, not better. We kids had a tearful session together to discuss how we could help Mom and Dad, and one of my sisters was moved to offer to give up her teaching job to care for Mom when the time came that Dad could no longer do so. As we reflected on our Lord and the suffering He is allowing our parents to go through, I have to say that we fell far short of understanding the answer to the question, "Why?" But because we know the Lord, we were able to comfort ourselves in the assurance of His love and the hope of our future in Him. Part of the answer we came up with was that this suffering gave us an opportunity to

demonstrate our love for Mom and Dad in a way we would not have were Mom healthy.

Ultimately, the answer to “Why?” when it comes to the suffering found in this world can be traced back to Adam’s sin. Sin entered the world by Adam, and death entered by sin. When God appointed Christ to be the high priest who would reverse this tragedy, He appointed Him to a task that was to involve great suffering. I want us to see that our passage mentions two ways Christ responded to the suffering involved with becoming our high priest.

A. Christ responded to suffering with prayer (v. 7). The One who hears our prayers as high priest prayed burdened prayers. He knows what it is like to need the Father to hear His prayers. Remember examples of this from His life:

1. As Christ begins His ministry, He is baptized and He prays (Luke 3:21). We all know about the baptism; do we know about the prayer?
2. Prior to commissioning His twelve apostles, He prayed (Luke 6:12-13).
3. In the midst of a busy ministry schedule, Christ remembered to find time to pray (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). Are we too busy to pray?
4. After feeding the 5 thousand and before stilling the stormy sea, Jesus prayed (Matt. 14:22-23; Mark 6:46; Luke 9:18). We remember the miracles, but do we remember the prayer?
5. He prayed with Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28). We remember that they saw His transfiguration. Do we remember that they prayed with Him?
6. Parents would bring their children to Him that He might pray with them and for them (Matt. 19:13). Do we want our kids to know what prayer is?

7. It was because they could see Him pray that His disciples asked to be taught by Him how to pray (Luke 11:1). He emphasized reverent submission, daily faith, and persistence. Christ was heard for He prayed with reverence (Heb. 5:7).
8. He prayed for Peter's faith prior to Peter's denials (Luke 22:32). Do you know someone defeated in spiritual battle who needs your prayers?
9. He prayed for his own troubled and fearful heart in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36f; Mark 14:32f; Luke 22:41f). This is likely the author's focus in Heb. 5:7.
10. He prayed from the cross that His torturers would have forgiveness (Luke 23:34), that the Father would care for His spirit in death (Luke 23:46), and then the prayer that the Father did not answer, "Why have you forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). That cry for help went unheeded.
11. There was a prayer He refused to pray (Matt. 26:53 to Pilate, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?").
12. As the risen and ascended Christ, He still prays for us. He prayed that God would send us the Holy Spirit to comfort and strengthen us, and He was heard (John 14:16). And as our high-priest He prays that we would be unified and sanctified in His Word (John 17:9, 15, 20).

Application: When we pray to our High Priest in our suffering, we pray to the One who had to pray in His own suffering. We pray to the One who prays for us and who is always heard because He always prays according to His Father's will. This is how Christ responded to suffering. He prayed. We too suffer, but do we pray as we ought?

B. Christ responded to suffering with obedience (v. 8). The One who asks us to obey while suffering had to obey while suffering in order to become our High Priest. The obedience of suffering was inappropriate for the Son in a way it is not

for us. He learned obedience having known only sovereignty before. We learn obedience having known only disobedience before. Christ learned obedience through suffering.

You may remember from Philippians 2 that Paul said Christ was a bond-slave who was obedient unto death, even death on the cross, and that we should have that same mindset in our desire to obey God. Our author here makes the same point in v. 9. We should obey the obedient One. Our obedience is not the author or cause of our eternal salvation – the obedience of Christ is. But those He saves in this way are those who obey Him. He has saved them, and He so works in their lives to make them obedient as He was obedient.

So Christ became our high priest by God's appointment. It was a step down for Him to be a part of our church, but it is an enormous step up for us to be so privileged. He is the eternal and universal priest, every sinner's only hope of forgiveness and eternal life. And Christ became our high priest through suffering. He responded to suffering with prayer and obedience, and we should too by His grace.

III. Christ became high priest through completion (vv. 9-10).

Application: It was not enough to start with God's plan and to start with suffering. To be our high priest, Christ had to finish the entirety of the plan and all of the suffering. He was perfected or completed (passive) because it was something the Father did to Him. He was called by God the high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. God completed the process of making Him that priest.

There is a related process that God is going to bring to completion in the life of each believer. Just as God made Christ the perfect or complete high priest of our church, so also

God is going to make you and I perfect or complete church members someday. This process will make Christ the firstborn among many brothers. He will not rest until it is finished or perfected, and He will not fail to get the job done (Rom. 8:28-39).

Conclusion: The One who perfected Christ's role in our church is perfecting ours. It is His appointment in our lives – we are not self-appointed to it, nor are we deserving of it. It involves suffering that we must learn the correct responses to – prayer and obedience, but in the end all works together for good because God's gracious work, His process of completion, never fails.

And in the end, all this means that our High Priest shall be the firstborn among many brothers. Will you be His brother?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*