

KING OF KINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Hebrews 5:7-10

Perfectly Completed

Fifth Sunday
in
Lent

Years ago, when the Betty Crocker company first began selling their cake mixes, they offered a product which only needed water. All you had to do was add water to the mix which came in the box, and you would get a perfect, delicious cake every time.

It bombed. No one bought it and the company couldn't understand why, so they commissioned a study which brought back a surprising answer. It seemed that people weren't buying the cake mix because it was too easy. They didn't want to be totally excluded from the work of preparing a cake; they wanted to feel that they were contributing something to it. So, Betty Crocker changed the formula and required the customer to add an egg in addition to water. Immediately, the new cake mix was a huge success.

Unfortunately, a similar situation arises as people look at the Christ and the Christian faith. It seems too easy and therefore isn't always wanted. People want to feel like they are participating in their salvation. They want to earn their way into heaven. Our text is one of countless texts that proclaim that Jesus did everything! Today, we will look at the completed work of Jesus that has taken away our sins. But as we consider what Jesus did, we'll see that he has given us much to do, because he has changed us into his servants.

The section of Hebrews from which our text is taken is about Jesus as our High Priest. The high priest in Israel represented the people before God. Because of their sins, the people could not stand before their holy God. So God provided the office of the high priest. His job was to go before God and offer sacrifices for the people's sins. In Hebrews, the comparison is that Jesus goes before God on our behalf. He is the high priest who offers the perfect sacrifice for the sin of the world — himself.

In our first lesson today, we heard remarkable promises from God. He will claim us as his

people. He will forgive our sins. You couldn't help but notice that God was promising to do all these actions. He wasn't asking for our participation or help. The last verse of our reading from Hebrews says, **"once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."** We would be mistaken if we thought this meant Jesus was growing toward perfection in his life. **"Made perfect"** isn't referring to his moral character, but to the fact that he completed his work as the Savior. He took away all sins by his death on the cross. He broke the grip of death and hell.

Of course, this wasn't easy. **"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death."** Our minds quickly go to Gethsemane where Jesus offered up prayer with a loud cry, **"Father, if it is possible, take this cup from me. But not my will, but yours be done."** As true God, Jesus could see the torment that was coming during his hours on the cross. As true man, he cried out to his Father for help. The punishment for sin was harsh. God does not think sin is cute or funny. It is an abomination of his holy will. It fills him with rage. Every ounce of his anger at sin was going to be directed at Jesus.

Jesus is commended for his **"reverent submission."** How's your reverent submission to God been? We are tempted to question God's will. We've stubbornly insisted on our way, will, or want. We've failed to trust God at all times. Our lack of reverent submission is the reason Jesus went to the cross. He knew we were facing an eternity of hell and he wanted to spare us. The suffering he endured — the holy anger of God — was a result of what we had done.

But Jesus' reverent submission is what brings about the new covenant we hear about in our first lesson. The new covenant is simple — God will forgive our sins. That's it! Nothing more. In

Jesus Christ sinner are forgiven and assured that they will live in heaven. Many would like the new covenant to involve us adding something or doing something. But the reality is that it is a completed work. Jesus didn't leave anything for us to do when it come to saving ourselves.

Jesus is our great high priest. In our text he is called a priest **"in the order of Melchizedek."** Melchizedek is a priest who appeared in the life of Abraham. After Abraham saved his nephew Lot from being captured by invading armies, he met Melchizedek. He was the king of Salem (Jerusalem) who was a priest of God. As a King and Priest, Melchizedek blessed Abraham; and Abraham gave an offering to Melchizedek.

Jesus is our priest-king. He is the One who sacrificed for us and who also rules all for us. So great is our Savior that we, like Abraham, give gifts to our Savior.

There is nothing that we can to do add to Jesus' work as our Savior, but there is still plenty for Christians to do. Later, in the same section of Hebrews, we read, **"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised"** (6:11-12). The news that we cannot do anything to save ourselves does not mean that we don't want to do anything.

We are new people whose will is changed to reflect God's will. **Reverent submission** is now possible because Jesus has given us a new will.

What does it mean that we will submit to God? Our prayer life will reflect Jesus' prayers. Our text says that **"Jesus offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard."** That doesn't seem right. He asked for his Father to take the cup from him. The cup of suffering never went away. He had to drink it. But that wasn't the point of Jesus' prayer, was it?

Jesus was asking for the Father's will to be done. No matter the cost, he submitted himself to God's will. It's a wonderful lesson for us as we pray. We can still make our bold requests to God. But at the same time, let us always place ourselves into his gracious hands and eagerly do his will. When Jesus did that, he was heard. The answer wasn't to take the suffering away, but to strengthen Jesus to endure the suffering. As we submit to God's will we can be sure that he will give us the strength to do his work.

Submitting to God's will means that our lives have a new focus. Sure there's lots to do in our everyday lives. But knowing Jesus and growing in him is the most important thing we can do. It means we see the people around us as souls who need a Savior and without one will be lost forever. It means that selfless service is our goal in relating to others. We can do what pleases God!

It seems far too easy. We are saved; but we did nothing. Lent is a time to rejoice in the overwhelming, free gift Jesus gives us. He is the **"source of salvation."** There's nothing we can do to add to it. **"The work of God,"** Jesus said, **"is to believe in the in the one he has sent"** (John 6:29). John wrote in 1 John, **"This is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ."** It seems too easy, but your guilt is washed away forever. You will live in heaven. And so, you can serve God today.

Let the completed work of Jesus inspire you to serve with confidence. Where you see weakness in your life, know that you are a child of God. As you struggle to confront those weaknesses, you don't become less of his child. And so, be diligent and faithful with the gifts you have been given. Be eager to grow and willing to change so that you reflect who you really and already are. Amen.

Lent 5
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