

Our Great High Priest

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 May 2022

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 6. For those of you who are visiting or new, my name is Sean. I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church. It's my joy and privilege to preach God's Word to you this morning.

Happy Mother's Day to those mothers out there. It's, I think, very appropriate that we are in a passage that is full of a genealogy, which would not be possible without the sacrificial mothers who are raising their children.

And I also recognize that on days like this, there are many women who have wanted to get married and have kids and have not been able to, or maybe who are married and have tried to have kids but have been unable to.

There are many women in our church who have gone through similar experiences but now have children that you can talk to as well. And I wanted to encourage you with this from Genesis 30, where Leah and Rachel, who are married to Jacob, and Leah has child after child after child, and Rachel is barren.

And it says in Genesis 30, verse 22, that then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

[1 : 17] Just so if you're in that place, just know that God remembers you, God sees you. And we would love to, as a church, to be able to pray for you as well. And we believe that God's the one who gives life.

He's the one who opens wombs. And we trust Him to do that again. So if you'd like to do that, please talk to me or Matt. We really would love to, as a church, pray for you, put an oil on you, pray for you so that God would open your womb.

Please, in your Bibles, turn with me to Exodus chapter 6, verses 10 to 30. And let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Heavenly Father, we believe that your Word is truth.

And that your Word is breathed out by you. And that it is able to make us wise for salvation in Jesus Christ. And we believe that even passages like this that seem to be flawless at times, or we wonder what its purpose is, Lord, we know that your Word is living and active, and it speaks to us. It points to Jesus. We pray that you would do that now. Address us in your Word. Remind us of Christ, our great High Priest.

[2 : 49] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Exodus 6, verses 10 to 30. So the Lord said to Moses, Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land.

But Moses said to the Lord, Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me? For I am of uncircumcised lips.

But the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

These are the heads of their father's houses. The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, Hanak, Palu, Hizron, and Carmi. These are the clans of Reuben.

The sons of Simeon, Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul. The son of a Canaanite woman. These are the clans of Simeon. These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations.

[3 : 58] Gershon, Kohath, and Morari. The years of the life of Levi being 137 years. The sons of Gershon, Libni, and Shimei by their clans. The sons of Kohath, Emram, Izar, Hebron, and Uziel.

The years of the life of Kohath being 133 years. The sons of Morari, Mali, and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations. Emram took as his wife Jochebed, his father's sister.

And she bore him Aaron and Moses. The years of the life of Emram being 137 years. The sons of Izar, Korah, Nepheg, and Zikri. The sons of Uziel, Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri. Aaron took as his wife Elishabah, the daughter of Aminadab, and the sister of Nashon. And she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eliezer, and Ithamar. The sons of Korah, Asir, Elkanah, and Abiaseth. These are the clans of the Korahites. Eliezer, Aaron's son, took as his wife one of the daughters of Putiel. And she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites by their clans.

[5 : 09] These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts. It was they who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt.

This Moses and this Aaron. On the day when the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, the Lord said to Moses, I am the Lord.

Tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, all that I say to you. But Moses said to the Lord, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?

This is God's holy and authoritative word. When Moses told Israel about God's promise to deliver them from their slavery in Egypt, the people of Israel were so discouraged after Pharaoh's refusal and ongoing oppression that they did not listen to him.

Remember what it said in Exodus 6 verse 9. They did not listen to Moses because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery. They've been oppressed and disappointed for so long.

[6 : 16] Their spirit was broken. Their courage failed. Their faith failed. They were downtrodden. And notice what God doesn't do here.

He does not turn around and rebuke the Israelites for their broken spirit. He knows that their reason for not listening to Moses here is not because of their stiff-necked pride, as it often is throughout their journey in the wilderness, but because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.

So God now turns his attention elsewhere. He says in verse 10, God's done addressing Israel now. His business is now with Pharaoh, the man who is responsible for his people's crushed spirit, the man who is responsible for their harsh slavery, the man who is responsible for crushing the spirit of Israel.

And the Lord now turns his face in judgment against Pharaoh. But it says in verse 12, Moses said to the Lord, Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me.

[7 : 33] How then shall Pharaoh listen to me? For I am of uncircumcised lips. But the Lord's resolve. We see that in verse 13, he is resolute.

But the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt. God just politely ignores Moses' objection and says, charge forward, press forward, because my business is now with Pharaoh.

No one will deter the Lord from his resolve to bring out Israel from their slavery. As it says in Numbers 23, 19, God is not man that he should lie or a son of man that he should change his mind. Has he said and will he not do it? Or has he spoken and will he not fulfill it? Now the Lord will act and now the Lord will bring the ten plagues upon Egypt.

Now the prelude is over and the main event is about to begin. And it's precisely at this moment of great anticipation and climactic confrontation that Moses inserts a genealogy.

[8 : 43] The narrative resumes in verse 26, but verses 14 to 25 is all a genealogy. And at first glance, the timing and the placement of this genealogy seems a bit odd.

What is going on here? You could have told us about Moses and Aaron, their genealogy at the beginning of the book, like some of the other books do. Why here?

The purpose of including the genealogy here isn't just to keep a detailed record of Israel's family tree for all the tribes of Israel. We can tell for several reasons.

It only covers the first three tribes of Israel, if you notice, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. It's the intention of this genealogy is not to keep a comprehensive record. And it seems to cover Reuben and Simeon only to get to the third tribe, Levi, which is where the rest of the genealogy is camped. It's focused on the tribe of Levi. Two, we know that it doesn't mention, it's an incomplete genealogy because there are many details that are omitted in this genealogy. For example, it doesn't mention any of the sons of Moses.

[9 : 50] And it doesn't mention Moses and Aaron's sister Miriam, even though she has a prominent role to play in the rest of the book. So that shows us that this genealogy is telescoped.

It's compressed. Because according to Numbers 33:9 as well, soon after the Exodus, it said all the males from a month old and upward within the tribe of Levi numbered 22,000.

This is shortly after the Exodus. There's far fewer than 22,000 people named here in this genealogy. It's not intended to be exhaustive. So all these things show us that the goal of this genealogy is not to be comprehensive, but to aid understanding, to convey a theological point. What point is Moses trying to drive home? To figure that out, we need to look at this passage much more closely. First, look at both verse 16 and verse 19.

They both contain the phrase, according to their generations. If you're with us for our sermon series in the book of Genesis, you know that that echoes of a recurring phrase, the organizing phrase in the book of Genesis, which says, these are the generations of Adam, these are the generations of Noah, these are the generations of Shem, Terah, Ishmael, Isaac, Esau, Jacob, and so on.

[11 : 09] So for readers who are familiar with the first five books of the Bible written by Moses, that's a key word, generations. And immediately then, this genealogy connects this history of the Exodus and Moses and Aaron to what God had promised to his people, his chosen patriarchs years ago, hundreds of years ago.

So it's showing us that God's covenant promises that he made first to Abraham and then to Jacob, to Isaac and Jacob, it's all coming true. And there are a couple other notable features in this genealogy.

There are only three people in this genealogy whose lifespans are noted. So look at verse 16. It says, Levi lived till 137. Verse 18 says, Kohath lived until 133.

Verse 20 says, Amram lived till 137. There are also only three people in this genealogy whose wives are specifically named, mentioned.

And they are Amram who married Jochebed, Aaron who married Elisheba, and Elisir who married one of the daughters of Putiel who bore him Phinehas.

[12 : 18] So by providing these additional details, Moses is highlighting those specific individuals for us in this genealogy. He's highlighting their genealogical line.

And I think the reason why he doesn't give the lifespans of the latter three characters is because they're still alive at the time of writing. And so if you trace the line from the people that are highlighted, from Levi to people that have their ages, their lifespans listed, to people who have their wives mentioned, this line goes through six men.

It's the only one that's traced down that far. It goes from Levi to Phinehas. So that's the focal point of this genealogy. And smack dab in the middle of that genealogy is Aaron.

It's bringing our attention to Aaron. Once we notice that Aaron is being highlighted, okay, that's great. Now you guys can see that. Once we recognize that Aaron is being highlighted here, we notice another interesting detail.

Even though Moses is the central character in the Exodus narrative, here the focus is more on Aaron than Moses. Moses' line is not traced all the way down. In fact, his sons are not even mentioned.

[13 : 27] But Aaron's line is traced down. And verse 20 says that Amram took as his wife, Jochebed, his father's sister, and he bore him Aaron and Moses. It mentions Aaron first, then Moses.

Same thing in verse 26. It says, These are the Aaron and Moses, to whom the Lord said, Bring the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts. We can explain the first instance by saying that Aaron is only mentioned first because he was born first in its genealogy.

But verse 26 is not part of the genealogy, yet Aaron's name is still mentioned before Moses. There's an intentional emphasis here on Aaron. And that stands out all the more because in the rest of Exodus, whenever the pair is mentioned together, Moses and Aaron, Moses is always mentioned first, 29 times total.

Only in this passage is Aaron mentioned first. So the focus on Aaron is confirmed further by the way the genealogy is framed.

I know this is getting a little detailed, but it's the only way we can understand this passage and learn from it. So thank you for being patient and being attentive through it. Look at verses 10 to 13 and verses 26 to 29.

[14:40] Verses 26 to 29 essentially repeat verses 10 to 13. In fact, if you pay close attention, you can actually see that the entire passage has this framing structure with the content of the first half being mirrored in the content of the second half.

This literary structure is called a chiasm. And it has the effect of honing in on what's in the middle of the matching elements. And here, that center of the chiasm is the birth of Aaron and Moses with emphasis on Aaron in particular.

So I have a... Can you guys... I probably can't read that because it's too fine. But basically, there are matching elements in the chiasm. In the beginning, it says, The Lord commands Moses to tell Pharaoh to let Israel go.

And Moses gives the excuse that he has uncircumcised lips in verses 10 to 12. The exact same thing happens in verses 28 to 30. And then the Lord commands Moses and Aaron to bring Israel out of Egypt in verse 13.

And the exact same thing happens in verse 26 to 27. And then it says, in the first half of genealogy, it says, These are the heads of the fathers' houses. And the same formula is referred to in 20 to 25.

[15:48] These are the heads of the fathers' houses. And Levi has a 137-year lifespan. Amram has a 137-year lifespan. Both of their two brothers are mentioned and their divisions...

So the Levitical tribe, what's highlighted is the three divisions of the Levitical tribe. And when it comes to the line of Aaron, it's the three sons of the high priests that are highlighted. And then that leaves the lone element that stands alone in verse 20, birth of Aaron and Moses.

So everything is being honed into that. And this framing structure is the key to unlocking the passage's meaning. I told you that they both speak of the fact that Moses objects to God's plan, saying, I have uncircumcised lips.

I can't speak to Pharaoh. And that's similar. It's more graphic because obviously you don't circumcise your mouth. But he's saying basically he feels unfit.

He feels excluded. He feels like that's not his place. He doesn't quite belong there. He can't address Pharaoh. For the same reason he gave in chapter 4, verse 10, Oh my Lord, I am not eloquent.

[16:55] I am slow of speech and of tongue. That's basically what Moses is saying. I have uncircumcised lips. And from a human standpoint, it's something...

We could be sympathetic to Moses. We can understand his objection because the people of Israel didn't listen to him because of their broken spirit. Then why should Pharaoh, one of the most powerful men in the ancient world, listen to him?

When Moses' own people would not listen to him, why would a foreign king who has no kinship or loyalty or any kind of obligation whatsoever to Moses listen to him?

When the slaves of Egypt would not listen to him, why would the king of Egypt listen to Moses? Moses is no eloquent orator who can command the attention of his audience.

He is slow of speech and of tongue. He has uncircumcised lips. I think we all know, we've all been in a situation, and we know how much it tests our patience to listen to a bad public speaker.

[17:59] Imagine a lecturer or a professor who just drones on and on in monotone voice, who loses his place in his speech and pauses for a really long time, awkward spots, and constantly stopping and starting again.

No matter how brilliant that professor is and no matter how important he or she might be, that he could be a Nobel laureate for all we care, it takes an incredible amount of patience to listen to someone like that.

But Pharaoh has no reason to show that kind of patience to Moses. So Moses knows this, knows this, and so he wants out.

This is his letter of resignation. God, I quit. I don't want anything to do with having to talk to Pharaoh. But Moses' objection, as we know, is only sensible from a human standpoint.

It makes no sense from a divine standpoint. Remember what God said to Moses in chapter 4, who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind?

[19:06] Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak. In Numbers 22, God makes Balaam's donkey speak.

Can he not then help Moses to speak? Of course. But Moses' faith in God isn't strong at this point. And God, even though he was rightly angry at Moses for thinking so little of him, he is nonetheless so gracious to Moses to provide Aaron. This is how God responded to Moses in chapter 4, verses 14 to 16.

Is there not Aaron your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do.

He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. It's that promise that's now being fulfilled in this passage.

[20 : 11] God has graciously accommodated Moses by providing Aaron to be his spokesperson, to be a priest and a prophet for him, to intercede on his behalf before Pharaoh, to speak to Pharaoh in his stead.

God chose Aaron specifically for this role, and that's why Aaron is the focal point of this passage. And this selection of Aaron also explains why later on in the first five books of the Bible, it's Aaron and his sons that are chosen for the priesthood.

And that's why it's also the tribe of Levi that is chosen to assist the priest with work in and around the tabernacle and later in the temple. Aaron's genealogy is a preview, and it provides the rationale for the Aaronic Levitical priesthood.

So the first half of the genealogy in verses 14 to 19, it begins with the clause, these are the heads of the father's houses, and it gives the name of Levi's three sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Mirari.

So these three are the heads of the divisions within the tribe of Levi that will lead God's people and will take care of the tabernacle, the tent of God. So they will be called Gershonites, Kohathites, and Mirarites in Numbers 3 to 4.

[21 : 28] And this is probably why, also when Aaron was first introduced to us in chapter 4, he is specifically called a Levite. According to Exodus 32, when the Israelites made a golden calf and worshipped the idol as God during Moses' long absence, the Levites remained loyal to Yahweh.

They chose the Lord over their fellow Israelites, and they purged Israel of the idolaters. And for that reason, Moses said to the Levites in Exodus 32, 29, today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.

So the Levites from that point on were consecrated for service to the Lord in and around the temple, assisting Aaron and his sons, the high priests. And so by emphasizing the Levitical heritage of Aaron here, Moses is bolstering the credibility of the Levites in their priestly role.

Here's why I've set the Levites apart. Aaron, Moses come from the tribe of Levi. And it's this Aaron and this Moses that God chose to use to deliver Israel from Egypt, to speak to Pharaoh.

Similarly, the second half of the genealogy, verses 20 to 25, tells us about Amram. Amram and how he had three generations of sons after him, Aaron, Eliezer, and Phinehas.

[22 : 47] And they all serve as high priests of the Lord for Israel. So this section provides a preview of that as well and a justification for Aaron's descendants serving as priests.

It's because God chose Aaron alongside Moses to serve the priestly function of representing God's people to God, as well as the prophetic function of speaking for God to God's people.

And that's why it's fitting for Aaron's descendants to follow that tradition to serve as priests of the nation of Israel. The genealogy concludes with Phinehas, which is also significant.

In Numbers 25, where the Israelites, it says, were after Moabite woman, and they begin to worship their idols, their false gods. And when a plague breaks out as a result of that, it's Phinehas who stays God's judgment by making atonement for the people of Israel.

And after that incident, God says concerning Phinehas in Numbers 25, 11 to 13, Phinehas, the son of Eliezer, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy.

[24 : 00] Therefore say, behold, I give to him my covenant of peace, and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel.

So by noting three generations of the Aaronic high priests here, Moses is also bolstering their credibility that they are indeed the descendants of this Aaron, the very Aaron who confronted Pharaoh on behalf of the Israelites and delivered them.

They are the ones whom God chose to serve as priests for Israel. And why is it so important to note and to support, add this kind of additional support for Moses and Aaron, and Aaron in particular?

It's necessary because Israelites, as we'll find out, are prone to grumble against God and prone to rebel against their leaders. If you look at verse 21, it names Korah, one of Esau's sons.

So Korah is Aaron's cousin. If you're familiar with the Bible, you'll recognize the name Korah from number 16. Korah is the man who gathers 250 chiefs of the congregation, well-known men, and then rebels against Moses and against Aaron, saying to them, you have gone too far, for all in the congregation are holy.

[25 : 27] All, everyone is holy. And the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord? Korah is not wrong in what he is saying.

The Lord is among the entire congregation of Israel. And he did promise them in Exodus 19, 6, you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

So all Israel is holy. And in a sense, there is a priesthood of all believers. Everyone is, in some sense, part of the kingdom of priests. However, that does not mean that there are no divinely sanctioned, duly appointed leaders in the nation of Israel.

So Moses responds to them, hear now, you sons of Levi, is it too small a thing for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel to bring you near to himself to do service in the tabernacle of the Lord and to stand before the congregation to minister to them and that he has brought you near him and all your brothers, the sons of Levi, with you?

And would you seek the priesthood also? Therefore, it is against the Lord that you and all your company have gathered together. What is Aaron? That you grumble against him.

[26 : 44] So from Moses' response, we can infer that Korah and his prominent men were grumbling against Aaron in particular. And they were leveraging their special status as Levites, as assistants in and around the tabernacle to make their case.

Why do you, Aaron, get to serve as high priest? Why do your sons get that privilege after you? I am a Levite also. My father is your father's brother.

What makes you so special? But God responds by reaffirming Aaron's role as high priest and consuming Korah and his companions.

This genealogy makes that clear distinction. Yes, Korah was a Levite and there are many other Levites, but it was Aaron and his line that God chose to minister as priests.

The people whom God chose as leaders over Israel were not perfect by any means. Aaron himself was not without his sins and faults. He abets Israel in their idolatry and helps them craft a golden calf in Numbers 12.

[27 : 55] Aaron himself grumbles and slanders Moses on account of his non-Jewish Cushite wife. Aaron was not perfect by any means, but he was nonetheless a high priest appointed by the Lord God.

So when Korah rebelled against Aaron, Moses told Korah, it's against the Lord that you and all your company have gathered together because the Lord appointed him.

God takes the leaders that he appoints seriously. And this is applicable in our context as well. In 2 Timothy 2, 14 to 19, Paul mentions Hymenaeus and Philetus who were false teachers who were sowing discord and undermining the ministry of Timothy in Ephesus.

And Paul comforts Timothy by alluding to this very instance of Korah and his rebellion against Aaron. And this is how he reassures him. The Lord knows those who are his.

Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity. The Lord cares that his servants are esteemed and listened to because they represent him. I thought it was very appropriate that this came up today because we had the joy of ordaining Matt into pastoral ministry this past week.

[29 : 14] And he will be filling in for me in a lot of capacities as I'm gone on vacation over the next few weeks. And I want to ask all of you in the same way that Paul asked the Thessalonian church in 1 Thessalonians 1, 12 to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

Not because the elders are perfect but because the Lord appointed them. According to him, according to Matt, the same respect and esteem and love that you've shown to me and you poured out to me.

Moses was fearful about addressing Pharaoh so God graciously appointed Aaron to be his spokesperson. Aaron interceded on behalf of Moses. He spoke for Moses to make up for Moses' weakness in speaking.

And when you lack the qualifications to approach and address a powerful ruler, we also need an advocate, an intercessor, a mediator, a priest.

If Moses needed Aaron when speaking to Pharaoh, a mere mortal, how much more do we need an intercessor when speaking with Almighty God, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords?

[30 : 38] This is the most important role that Aaron had as high priest of Israel. Priests in those days were fully devoted to God so they were not given a piece of the promised land like the rest of the tribes of Israel.

The rest of the tribes of Israel worked the land, farmed the land, to get provisions for them, but instead, Levi and the priests were to be fully devoted to the service of God in the tabernacle. So they were charged with enforcing the worship of God and with making sacrifices to atone for the sins of God's people. They were the priests that interceded before God on behalf of God's people and it was only because of them that God's people could approach God in worship. only because of them that their sins could be atoned for. But despite this all-important work, the priests of Israel left much to be desired.

As Hebrews 7, 23 to 28 point out, God appointed men in their weakness as high priests. They were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office.

[31 : 47] These high priests were mortal. So they could not provide permanent, unbroken intercession on behalf of God's people. Moreover, they were still sinful. So it says in Hebrews again that they were required to offer sacrifices daily first for their own sins and then for the sins of those people.

Look at the genealogy again. Look at verse 23. It names Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu. Their names are a stark reminder of the occupational hazards of priesthood because in Leviticus 10, 1 to 2, it says, Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Ministering before a holy God comes with occupational hazards because God cannot be trifled with, his commands cannot be taken lightly, and he must be honored as holy.

So these priests were themselves subject to the frailties and sinfulness of man. They had to approach God in the temple with fear and trembling. In fact, in Hebrews 10, 1 to 3, it points out that the sacrifices that the high priest offered every year on the Day of Atonement served as a reminder for sin, reminder of sins every year for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The sacrifice that the priest worked hard to offer ultimately did not cleanse God's people of their sins. People remained conscious of their sins. They still could not enter the most holy place of God, the dwelling place of God because of their impurities.

[33 : 39] So then the sacrifices served as a kind of exercise that prefigured the ultimate atonement for sin that Jesus would make. Hebrews 7, 22 says that Jesus is the guarantor of a better covenant because he, unlike Aaron and his sons, is without sin and because he, as the resurrected Lord, lives forever.

And even Levi, he writes, the author of Hebrews writes, within the loins of Abraham paid homage to priest king Melchizedek in Genesis 14. And it says there that Jesus, in Hebrews 7, that Jesus is appointed high priest after the order of Melchizedek rather than the order of Aaron.

So Jesus had a better, eternal priesthood. Jesus does not need to make sacrifice over and over again. this is why when we come to the Lord's table for communion, for the Lord's supper, we do not think of it or talk of it as a sacrifice.

There's some denominations that do, but it's not a sacrifice. It's the Lord's table. It's not an altar where we offer up the Lord in sacrifice again because Jesus doesn't need to be sacrificed again. It says in Hebrews 7, 27, Jesus did this once for all when he offered up himself. Hebrews 9, 12, Jesus entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thereby securing an eternal redemption.

[35 : 17] Hebrews 10, 10, it says we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. It is finished. So we come to the Lord's supper to celebrate what Jesus has already accomplished so that we can remember it, memorialize it, and so that the benefits of what he has already accomplished can be applied to us spiritually.

As we read in the call to worship and in the assurance of pardon, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens who is not unable to sympathize with our weaknesses and he assures us that we will, when we approach God, receive mercy and find grace.

Hebrews 7, 25 says Jesus is always making intercession for us. It's in the present tense. God is presently and eternally making intercession for us.

yes, you are right. We are sinners through and through. Yes, you are right that we do not deserve to approach God's throne lest we be consumed by his holiness.

Yes, you are right that we should never hope that the Lord would listen to us. But the good news is that Jesus is our great high priest. Jesus is, right now, making intercession for us to his heavenly father so that we can approach God and so that we can have confidence to speak to God.

[36 : 55] First John 2, 1 says, if anyone sins, we have an advocate. Jesus is our advocate. Do you know that each time you sin, every little sin that you commit, every great sin you commit, our great high priest is advocating for you at the right hand of the father.

Father, I died for her sin. I died for her sin. Father, I paid for that sin. My righteousness is on him. I don't know if some of you are like me, but I have a deeply sinful and prideful self-centered tendency to minimize my own sins and make excuses for myself because I can't bear the thought that I have to deal with that, that that's my problem to be dealt with.

But we don't have to do that, brothers and sisters. We don't have to minimize our sins. We don't have to make excuses for ourselves because we don't speak for ourselves. Jesus speaks for us. He intercedes for us. He is our forgiveness. He is our redemption. He is our salvation. So let's not live like a people who don't have a priest. Let's not shrink in fear and shame like we don't have an advocate.

[38 : 23] We have a great high priest in Jesus who is now interceding for us in the heavenly places. Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, what freedom we have in Christ.

What assurance, what strong assurance we have in Christ. We are not our own but belong to you. We do not speak for ourselves.

Christ speaks for us. We thank you for that. And help us now to live in light of that truth. Help us to boldly approach your throne of grace.

Help us to cry out to you day and night knowing that we have a hearing from our loving Father. we worship you.

We love you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.