

UNIT 26

+

THE HOUR

HAS COME

“He Holds His Priesthood Permanently”

by Andrea Burke

Four years ago, my husband and I went through the family court adoption process. The task was daunting but one that we knew needed to happen. The thing is we're not lawyers. We're not judges. We needed someone to step into that gap for us, and so, we hired the best adoption attorney we could find and set to work. After months of waiting for court dates, documents, and nervously awaiting phone calls, we eventually sat in a marble courtroom at an ornately-carved table where our daughter's feet couldn't even touch the floor.

Our lawyer arrived with beefy stacks of paperwork—all of the official documentation to present to the judge, who would give his final stamp of authority. It culminated in the moment he swirled his signature across the last line on the last page, stating this act was “final and irrevocable,” forever changing our lives.

I can't think of many modern examples of how we can understand the work of the high priest in Scripture, but that moment in that courtroom was one. The work of the high priest wasn't just the work of someone who knew all the religious laws, nor was it the priesthood as we understand it today—at best, denomination-dependent, or at worst, cloaked in scandal. The work of the high priest was one of maintaining not just a religious status but a legal one. Where the people could not make amends or sacrifices for their sins, the high priest bore the weight and responsibility to follow and obey God's laws and rituals to stand in on behalf of the people. The high priest, if you will, knew the right paperwork to fill out, where to find the notaries, and what to say when standing before the judge. Where the people were guilty, the high priest stepped in as a lawyer—the kind no one could really afford.

The Judge is eternally satisfied. The Priest has made perfect peace. The blood of the final sacrifice has been spilled. Sufficient. Done.

LEGALLY QUALIFIED

The high priest was a role that all of Israel was dependent on. As laid out in the book of Leviticus, under the law, the high priest stood as mediator between God and the people. Where the people fell short, the high priest made sacrifices. He stood as a “holier” priest, one who could step into the places where those who were unclean could not. He was like a lawyer doing what needed to be done on behalf of those who were not qualified. Clothed in glorious raiment, his role in the tabernacle was elevated and nearly royal.

Where the law stopped short and humans simply could not make the ends meet, Jesus arrived as our final High Priest. Christ reminds us in Matthew 5:17 that He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. Jesus was qualified beyond any other priest. Holier than any other man. Set apart in more ways than any other priest who came before Him. Able to make a perfect sacrifice and mediate to the fullest. Jesus had the sinlessness, the access to God, and all of the qualifications to finish the work He set out to do.

MEDIATOR BEFORE THE JUDGE

When we sat in the courtroom waiting for the judge, our lawyer filled us in on everything he knew about the judge. “He’s pretty straightforward,” our lawyer said. “And he’s always running late.” Clearly this wasn’t the first adoption case our lawyer had worked on. In fact, that’s why we hired him. He knew the judge, and as soon as the judge entered the room, it was clear the judge knew him. A familiar friendliness lingered as we waited for the small talk to subside.

Jesus does not come before God the Father as a stranger. He is not new to the system, bumbling along like a fresh-out-of-law-school attorney. The Judge is His Father. And Jesus stands as High Priest, reminding us that He also presents us as the ones He has atoned for. Not only is the Judge our Father too, but the lawyer is our Brother. His perfect record and perfect relationship with the Judge establishes Him as the perfect Priest. We have nothing to fear.

FINAL AND IRREVOCABLE

The high priest was to bear the judgment of the people on himself. Part of his priestly attire literally called upon him to carry the names of the tribes of Israel etched on onyx stones on his shoulders (Exodus 28:9-12). No doubt, mediating the sins of God's people was a weighty and serious burden to bear. The Day of Atonement called for the high priest to make a sacrifice on behalf of the entire nation of Israel. On one day only, this anointed priest would strip himself of the colorful high priestly garments and put on a linen robe, putting aside the glory and beauty of his normal attire to take on the plain and humble. He would enter the holy of holies once a year to make this peace with God. Perfect animal sacrifices, without flaw or blemish, were required, and their blood provided the atonement. This imagery drenches the Old Testament, and begs the question—Is this really sufficient?

Then Jesus arrived, our ultimate High Priest, who emptied Himself and took the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7), offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice once and for all. Just as our judge proclaimed the legal work was “final and irrevocable” as we sat in that courtroom,

so God the Father accepted Christ's work as final and irrevocable. The Judge is eternally satisfied. The Priest has made perfect peace. The blood of the final sacrifice has been spilled. Sufficient. Done.

If we're honest, books like Leviticus cause our eyes to glaze over, and the fine details of the law are lost. Yet Christ's being our High Priest is the great fulfillment of an echoing picture throughout Scripture. Someone holier than us had to come and make things right, for we cannot sit before the eternal Judge without a mediator. In stepped Christ to this musty earth, laying aside His glory to make final atonement. “The hour has come,” Jesus said in John 12:23, and into the heavenly holy of holies He stepped as our perfect mediator, our perfect High Priest.



His perfect record and perfect relationship with the Judge establishes Him as the perfect Priest.

THE ANointed PRIEST

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

Those who follow Jesus are called to sacrifice in order to show His worth, prioritizing Him above all as they point others to Him.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

John 12

+ **SETTING:**

One day before Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, six days before the Passover festival and His crucifixion, Jesus visited with His friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Just a short time earlier, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, calling him to come out of the tomb that had been his final resting place for four days. This visit no doubt was accompanied by celebration and thanksgiving for the miracle Jesus had performed, but it also gave rise to acts of devotion and rejection that would culminate in the great High Priest's sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the world.

DAY 1

READ:

John 11:1–12:1

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 12:1

NOTES

Sometimes the Bible says something that we have read so many times that we fail to feel the weight of the punch. In the first verse of John 12, the apostle gives some information on Jesus’s whereabouts—when it was, where He was, and whom He was with. It’s the kind of sentence we read to get our bearings as we get on to the real story that follows.

John described Bethany as the place where Lazarus lived, the one whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Excuse me? Raised from the dead!

If we are not careful, we will read over that phrase without feeling the punch. But that is to fail to see the glory of it! Lazarus was one of a kind. Though Jesus interrupted a funeral in Nain by raising a young man (Luke 7:11-17) and raised Jairus’s daughter (8:49-56), those events likely happened within an hour or so of their deaths.¹ John 11 tells us Lazarus was in the tomb four days before Jesus arrived to call him out of darkness. This was no hospital resuscitation. This was a graveside resurrection.

This was the setting John wanted us to see. Jesus didn’t raise Lazarus to new life and go on His merry way. Lazarus became part of Jesus’s life. Jesus came back to visit him in Bethany. He dined with him. What Lazarus enjoyed that day around the table with Jesus is what all in Christ will one day enjoy with Him after they, like Lazarus, are raised from the dead.

How does the resurrection of Lazarus point us to and give hope for our resurrection in Christ?

DAY 2

READ:

John 12:1-11

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 12:2-3

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #70: UNION WITH CHRIST

At the heart of our salvation is our union with Christ. The Bible describes salvation as entering into a covenant relationship with God and also describes the church (which is made up of believers) as the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32). Christians believe that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Christ in us) and that we are simultaneously dwelling in Him (Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27; 3:1-4). This union is indissoluble; it will last for all eternity.

It was a normal day in the town of Bethany. The sun came up. People went to work. The marketplace was busy with people buying and selling. The fields were alive with workers. But something remarkable was also happening. Jesus was coming to town. He and His disciples visited His friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. When His friends realized He was coming, they threw a dinner party.

It was a normal day in the town of Bethany, except it wasn't at all.

Every day is that way for us. We have our routines. We go about our business. We have things to do and responsibilities to take care of. But amidst it all, Jesus is there. He is with us. He is the friend we always need. We may not be able to see Him in the flesh as they would that day in Bethany, but He is as present and real today as He was then.

That day, Lazarus reclined with Jesus at the table. He who was once dead was now alive and having dinner. What an amazing reality! And it will be so for us believers one day. In Lazarus we see a foreshadowing of what all in Christ will one day enjoy. Jesus will come to town. He will raise our bodies to new life, and instead of us throwing Him a party, He will throw us one (Revelation 19:6-9).

How does the hope of future resurrection give you hope now to live for Christ?

DAY 3

READ:

John 12:1-11

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 12:4-5

NOTES

Judas was one of Jesus's disciples, but he did not truly follow Him. Judas shows us that it is possible to be around Jesus and to be around Jesus's people and yet not love Jesus. Being a Christian is more than proximity to Jesus, it is bowing the heart to Him. Judas stood outside while sitting in the inner circle. He never bowed his knee to the Lord. He serves as a warning to us.

Being a disciple of Jesus means loving Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. It means seeing Jesus as He truly is. It means dying to ourselves and taking up our cross. Judas refused to do any of that. He viewed a jar of perfume as more valuable than Jesus Himself. He was unwilling to give up his selfish greed for the joy of knowing Jesus. He knew Jesus without knowing Him. He followed without following. He asked questions without learning. From the outside, he looked like he was inside Jesus's circle, but he wasn't.

If you fear you may be like that, the hope of the gospel tells us that Jesus can overcome our reluctance to follow Him. He can change our hearts, and our only part is yielding to Him. Judas simply refused to do so. We don't have to follow his example. We can bow our hearts to Jesus right now and accept His mercy and grace. We can find a friend in Jesus today, a friend who is always there, who will never leave us nor forsake us because He was forsaken for us.

What in your life is more valuable to you than Jesus right now, and how can you give it up for the joy of knowing Christ is better?

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"It is worth sacrificing all for the sake of the kingdom."²

—Joe Kapolyo

DAY 4

READ:

John 12:1-11

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 12:6

NOTES

Questions can sometimes hide the heart. Judas asked Jesus why Mary did not sell her perfume and give the money to the poor, but that wasn't really his question. Behind the spoken word was distrust and dislike of the Word Himself. Judas didn't want Jesus. Judas questioned Jesus the way Satan does—doubting His goodness, usurping His authority, and trying to escape His lordship.

While Judas was going around with Jesus and His disciples, he hid his heart from them all—all except Jesus, of course. As John writes about who Judas was in John 12, he writes from the vantage point of hindsight. All of Judas's words and actions find meaning after he was revealed as the betrayer. It is doubtful anyone but Jesus knew who Judas really was when they walked ancient Jerusalem together.

We can be like Judas in some ways. We can ask questions that aren't really the questions we want to ask. We want to sound holy while keeping our slice of the pie. But if we will yield our heart to Jesus and let Him set the rules for our life, if we will put to death our selfish desires and ask the Lord to change us, we will find in Him a friend unlike any other. Jesus died for selfish people. He died for unspiritual people. He died to make dead people alive. We can trust Him to change our hearts if we need Him to. He won't reject us. He will simply forgive us and save us.

How do you need the forgiveness of Christ today for your sin?

DAY 5

READ:

John 12:1-11

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 12:9-11

NOTES

Living for Christ is not easy. Because this world is infected by sin brought on by rebellion against God, living for Christ makes for a dangerous life. Those in Christ are at war with this world simply because God's Spirit dwells in them. That can be a fearful thing unless we realize that even this world's worst is no match for Jesus's best. One day, He will raise all His people to live with and enjoy Him forever.

That gospel hope of ultimate redemption should inspire us to live for Christ today. We can speak the gospel's truth in the face of opposition because the One who is with us is greater than the one who is against us. As you read the New Testament, you see time and time again God's people facing opposition. But time and time again, you also see God's Spirit emboldening and encouraging God's people. They suffer, but they rejoice (Acts 5:41). They are imprisoned, but they sing (Acts 16:16-40). They are flogged, lashed, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and scorned, but they boast in their weakness because in it, Christ's strength is shown (2 Corinthians 11:16-33).

In your weakness, Jesus is your strength as well. Others may come to faith from your brave example of trusting Jesus when it's not easy to do so. Praise be to God!

How have you seen the strength of Jesus in your weakness?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“Martha herself was taking great care with the service and was ministering to Christ with all her heart. Mary herself was seated at the feet of Jesus and kissing them. . . . Christ beholds them both with his divine eyes and is cheered and rejoices over the purity of their mode of life and the offering to him of their undefiled service.”³

—Athanasius (c. 296–373)

POINT 1: Jesus’s followers sacrifice greatly for Him (John 12:1-3).

Martha’s service of hospitality was a sacrifice that revealed her devotion to Jesus.

? **What adjectives or characteristics express the way we should serve the Lord?**

By anointing Jesus, Mary was giving Jesus her very best, a sacrifice of devotion and worship.

? **What types of sacrifices can someone offer to Jesus today?**

POINT 2: Jesus’s followers prioritize being with Him (John 12:4-8).

Disciples must turn from sin and differentiate between doing the good things—good works—and the better thing—being with Jesus.

? **Why is it sometimes easier to do good works than to spend time cultivating our relationship with Jesus?**

KEY DOCTRINE #70: UNION WITH CHRIST

At the heart of our salvation is our union with Christ. The Bible describes salvation as entering into a covenant relationship with God and also describes the church (which is made up of believers) as the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32). Christians believe that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Christ in us) and that we are simultaneously dwelling in Him (Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27; 3:1-4). This union is indissoluble; it will last for all eternity.



Though Jesus is not with us physically, how can we spend more time with Him?

POINT 3: Jesus’s followers help others believe in Him (John 12:9-11).

Jesus’s miracles drew a crowd, but some simply enjoyed the spectacle and did not turn to trust the miracle-worker.



How have miracles in your life pointed you or others to Jesus?

Because of Lazarus’s resurrection, many came to believe in Jesus, trusting in what He did in Lazarus’s life and what He could do in their lives.



From Day 2: How does the hope of future resurrection strengthen you now to live for Christ?

MY RESPONSE

Because Jesus is our greatest treasure, we live with open hands, willing to sacrifice everything to make Him known to the nations.

- **HEAD:** What doubts do you struggle with about Jesus, and how does the Bible address those doubts?
- **HEART:** What about Jesus makes you love Him more? Meditate on those things until your heart warms toward Him.
- **HANDS:** What can you sacrifice to help others see Jesus is everything?



Scan this QR code to access this session’s Scripture passages.

VOICES from THE CHURCH

“If we really see Jesus for who he is—the almighty, infinite God of the universe who condescended to take on human form so that he could die a brutal death in the place of his rebellious creatures—if we understand his beauty—that he is the all-satisfying, wondrous, joyful God who promises to give peace, blessing, and satisfaction in himself to those who come to him—if we get this, how can we possibly withhold anything from him?”⁴

–Matt Carter and Josh Wredberg