

Jesus is Priest
1 Sam 2:27-35, Psalm 24:1-6

Well brothers and sisters, let me ask you this morning -what do you expect in a worship service? Or perhaps we should ask what **should** you expect in a worship service? A sermon... music and singing, the Lord's Supper, opportunities to serve and to give? What about a sense of God's presence?

I think we might also expect to be encouraged and refreshed after enduring a week of challenges and trials out in the world.

Or maybe you don't really have any expectations for worship – just as long as you can be in and out in an hour...

Brothers and sisters, what do you expect in a worship service? What should you expect in a worship service? And just as we asked last week in regards to sermons... do we really need to have worship services??

Could we not just meet our need for inspiring praise music and good sermons by watching something on U-tube?

Or can't it be sufficient to feel close to God while you're out hiking in the mountains? Why do we need attend services?

But brothers and sisters, we still need worship services – and not just because it's my job, but because as Hebrews 10:25 says we should not give up *“meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another all the more as we see the day approaching.”* And our Lord Jesus instructed us in Luke 22 that we are to continue eat and drink the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Him, and Paul emphasizes this in 1 Cor 11:26 that when we do so *“we proclaim the Lord's death until he returns.”*

But it goes deeper than this brothers and sisters - and this morning we want to be convicted and convinced that not only do we need to have regular weekly Sunday morning worship services - but that all of our life needs to be worship...

And I think you would agree that any follower of Jesus Christ who is worshipping Monday to Saturday, in their home, at work, at school, in whatever they do is an example of what it

looks like when Jesus' followers are at their best!

So I would say that we need to have worship services because ALL of life is worship, and this is the truth brothers and sisters because... Jesus is Priest.

Now when we confess that Jesus is Priest, we mean that He holds the Office of Priest. This is not just a description of His work on the cross. No – Jesus is the official Priest that stands between God and Humanity and represents Humanity to God, and as Hebrews 4:10 says He is the greatest High Priest.

So what this means is that any other High Priest, or Priest that had been officially commissioned by God in the past is surpassed and subsumed by Jesus Christ, our great High Priest.

Now, Jesus receives this Priestly Office in its general sense when He assumed our Humanity in the Incarnation, as He did our Prophetic Office, and this is part of our human nature – because humanity was created in the Image of God.

Being created in God's image means that we are kings, which is easy to see in verses like Gen 1:28 where God says "*fill the earth and subdue it, rule over it...*" And prophets, Gen 2:19 Adam names the animals and whatever he called that animal, that was its name, and priests.

Now, it's a bit more challenging to find some sort of example of Adam and Eve functioning as Priests prior to the fall – but that's because our primary understanding of a priest is one who assists people in offering sacrifices to pay for their sins, functioning as a go-between because sinful people can not come into the presence of a Holy God.

But brothers and sisters, the true role of a Priest – prior to the fall - is to offer the creation back to God as an act of worship. God initiates and creates, humanity responds in obedience to what God commanded and presents it to God as worship.

We see this in Gen 2:15 says that God puts the man in the Garden of Eden to "to work it and take care of it." And these two verbs "*abad*" and "*shamar*" are used later on in the

scriptures to describe worship activities. Thus the activity of multiplying and filling the earth, subduing it and ruling it – and everything that this involves and will involve – can be considered to be worship that is to be offered to God.

And we see it as well in Psalm 24:1. Yahweh “*founded*” the world upon the seas and “*established*” it upon the waters. And these two verbs “*yasad*” and “*kun*” show up later on in scripture with regards to the building of temples.

So, the implication is that when God created the cosmos, He was creating a massive temple. A place where He might be worshipped and the worship that is offered to Him is shaped by what it means to rule over and speak to the creation to subdue it and develop it.

So to summarize, the earth is a temple, a temple is for worship, those who live and work in temples are priests, and their job is to bring worship offerings to God.

Thus, our call to steward, care, develop, rule the creation, in obedient response to God’s command, in order to offer it back to Him to praise Him and glorify him... is worship – that’s the definition of worship, that’s why we say “*All of life is worship!*”

This is the ultimate purpose of our Priestly office. It frames everything else we’re going to look at and learn about Jesus being our great High Priest.

So with this background in place let’s look at our scripture reading from 1 Samuel 2 this morning to see what we can learn about how the fall into sin affected the priestly office.

It starts off in vs 27 referencing the clear call of God to Eli’s ancestor Moses, who was his great uncle and the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Just so we know there was no miscommunication.

Vs. 28 is about God’s decision to make Aaron and his son the first Priests of Israel, a privileged and honored position. Eli’s father Ithamar, was the son of Aaron the High Priest.

We also see some of the main points of the Aaronic priestly duties – to approach the sacred altar of Yahweh, to burn incense to Him, and to wear the Ephod, a special garment which had an onyx stone on each shoulder with the names of the tribes of Israel engraved on it, representing how He represented all of Israel to Yahweh. We also find reference here to the fact that God had prescribed particular portions of animal sacrifices to be set aside and given to the priests to provide food for them.

In Vs. 29, God lays out the charge against Eli and His sons. They are taking the best parts of the offerings, which belong to God, for themselves instead of being content with what God has said they may have.

Eli himself was not doing this, but his sons were and he did nothing to stop them. Additionally in 1 Sam 2:22 Eli hears that his sons are sleeping with the women who are serving at the entrance to the Tabernacle. He gives them a warning about this – but that was it, and his sons ignore him.

So God will do something about it. Vs. 30 explains that Priests are to be those who honor the Lord, and if they do He will honor them, but if they despise Him through deliberate disobedience and immorality when they know better and have been warned by their father, God himself will despise them.

Thus the consequences and punishment for his son's wickedness and Eli's lack of disciplining them are outlined in vs. 31 to 34. God will put an end to Eli's line serving Him as priests. None of his descendants will reach a good old age, they will die in the prime of their life, there will be trouble in Tabernacle. Anyone who is spared is only spared for further trouble. To prove that this is going to take place, Eli will see both of his son's die on the same day.

Lastly, in vs. 35 God puts forward His alternative. Since the line of Eli is going to be cut off from serving as priests, God will raise up a faithful priest. In contrast to Eli's line this priest will obey God always doing what is in God's heart and mind. This priest will be firmly established and they will always minister before God's anointed one.

So this is an important story with regards to the Priestly office.

It reminds us that God implemented the Aaronic Priesthood as part of His plan to bring Israel out of slavery for the purpose of facilitating proper worship. You might remember in Ex 4:23 God says to Pharaoh *“Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, “Let my son go, so he may worship me.”*

So, the Aaronic Priesthood is still about worship, but now worship has to contain sacrifices to atone for sin, it has sacred places where only the priests are permitted to go – the altar, it has specific duties that must be performed that only the priests can perform – like burning incense and there are activities that are not to be included in worship – like sexual intercourse.

This story helps us see that the Aaronic priesthood was necessary because of how Sin had warped and twisted the original office of priest hood for humanity with regards to worship. Israel had no idea how to worship God properly. They did not know how to approach Him in a way that

accounted for the truth about their sin and who God was as a Holy, almighty, transcendent, all powerful, un-created God.

Left to their own devices they would simply copy what other nations did for worship – which is ironically what happened when Moses was up on the mountain getting the 10 commandments.

They got Aaron to build them idols, golden calves, and they said this is the god who led us out of Egypt and then proclaimed a feast to Yahweh the next day where they made sacrifices and ate them and feasted and then engaged in *“revelry.”* Not off to a good start worshipping Yahweh.

And even though God gives them the Aaronic priesthood and all the correct ways to deal with their sin, and acknowledge who God is, and live obediently before Him, only a few generations later we see the very people who ought to be leading the people in proper worship, being deliberately disobedient in their calling as priests. Which leads us to the tragic end of Eli’s family. You might remember the story...

A few years later Israel loses a battle against the Philistines. They regroup and figure they will secure their victory for the next battle by having Eli's sons bring the ark down to the battlefield to go ahead of the army. But the Lord is not with Eli's sons, nor with Israel and He allows them to be defeated. Eli's sons are both killed and the Ark is captured. When Eli receives the news he falls over in shock and breaks his neck and dies as well.

The rest of the curse plays out while Saul and David reign as the Lord's anointed King over Israel. And it's important that we know how it turns out because we want see how God eventually keeps His promise to raise up a faithful priest who will always serve the King.

So Eli's line continues through his grandson Ichabod, and they multiply and continue to serve as priests – as the curse says *“some good will be done to Israel.”* But eventually they are all cut off from serving at the altar of the Lord when King Saul has all of them executed for treason because one of them helped

the David escape Saul's jealous pursuit. Only one of Eli's descendants, Abiathar, escapes and joins David's men.

Later, when David becomes King, Abiathar serves as the High Priest. When Solomon becomes King he removes Abiathar as High Priest. Zadok, a descendent of Aaron's son Eleazor takes his place and 1 Kings 2:27 notes this fulfills *“the word the Lord had spoken at Shiloh about the house of Eli.”*

But Zadok's succession of Eli is not the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to raise up a faithful priest. The successive generations of kings and priests in Israel proved Zadok's priestly house was just as unfaithful as Eli's had been. Listen to what the prophets would say about them;

Hosea 4:7-8 *“The more priests there were, the more they sinned against me; they exchanged their glorious God for something disgraceful. They feed on the sins of my people and relish their wickedness.”*

Ezekiel 22:26 *“Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths.”*

And final proof that Zadok’s line was not the faithful priest that would be firmly established, always serving the Lord’s anointed King, was the destruction of the temple in 586 BC when Israel was sent into exile.

Even the restoration of the temple and the Aaronic priesthood seventy years later cannot be considered the fulfilment of God’s promise because there was no king over Israel at that time. The fulfilment of God’s promise in 1 Samuel 2:35 requires both a priest and a king.

Of course this is where Jesus comes in, the author of Hebrews proclaims that Jesus was raised up by God to fulfill this promise which requires both a priest and a king. In Heb 5:5-6 we read *“In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the*

glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

Now these two instances the writer is referencing are from Psalm 2:7 which is a Psalm about God’s king ruling from Mt. Zion, and from Psalm 110:4 another Psalm about God’s king ruling from Zion and stating that this King will have priestly duties as well. And both of these Psalms are well known as Messianic psalms.

So with the understanding that Jesus is the promised Messiah the writer of Hebrews is applying these verses as God’s words to Jesus Christ and stating this makes Jesus both King and Priest – which means that Jesus is the one who fulfills the promise of a faithful priest in 1 Sam 2:35 who always serves God’s anointed king.

And if there is any doubt that this is the case, the reference to Melchizedek in Psalm 110:4 clears it all away because

Melchizedek is known from Gen 14:18 as the King of Salem who was a Priest of the Most High God. He was both priest and king.

Now its not hard to see Jesus' qualifications to be the King of Israel, after all the Christmas story tells us that Jesus was connected to the line of King David through his mother's engagement to Joseph.

But there is no such connection for Jesus to the Aaronic Priesthood. In fact when Jesus begins His public ministry, he does not engage with anything related to the Priesthood. The only connection Jesus has with them is that the Chief Priests from the line of Zadok conspired to kill him, arrested him and had him condemned by Pilate.

So if we're looking for a connection between Jesus and the Aaronic priesthood the only one we'll find is that the Aaronic priesthood unwittingly offers Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice and in doing so, rendered themselves unnecessary.

Its actually a critical to Jesus becoming the great High Priest that he is not connected to the Aaronic priesthood because it was temporary, and Jesus' priesthood is eternal. The Aaronic priesthood is not the original priesthood. Jesus did not come to redeem the Aaronic priesthood, but to fulfill it and in doing so He redeems the creational office of priest for all of us.

And Jesus not only lives a perfect life, making all of what He did with God's creation; perhaps working with Joseph as a carpenter, doing chores for Mary, all of this acceptable to offer back to God to praise and honor Him as worship...

Additionally Jesus perfectly fulfills his unique calling as the Messiah, in spite of the temptation to find a way other than the cross, He is obedient to God's will and offers His service back to God to praise Him and honor Him and bring Him glory.

Thus writer of Hebrews proclaims in Heb 5:7 *"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent*

submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect [complete], he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”

Brothers and sisters, all of this means that we can now pursue our original calling as Priests because we are connected to Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. And we can offer what we do with our lives, what we do with God’s creation, in obedience to our original calling and God’s creational design... we can offer this back to God through Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit as worship! To give God praise and glorify Him.

That’s why Paul exhorts us in Romans 12:1 *“I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”*

And when Christ returns and makes all things new, we will be completely restored to our Priestly Office, and enabled to

bring our work with the New Creation directly into the presence of God - because Jesus is our High Priest. Listen to how Revelation 21: 23-26 describes it *“the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it [the City of God]. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.”*

But until that day comes brothers and sisters, we gather together each week on the Lord’s Day to worship together so that we might be prepared and equipped to worship apart.

As we gather together and are lead into God’s presence through priestly ministry of Christ’s Body, we are reminded of our priestly task lead our families into in God’s presence, to lead our friends and neighbors into God’s presence, to present our work, our studies, our words and actions and thoughts before God as holy offerings which give Him praise and glory!

As 1 Timothy 4:5 says *“For everything God created is good...”* and remember how wide and vast God’s creation is – its far more than nature as we learn in the TALK Show... *“and*

nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.”

Brothers and sisters what parts of God’s creation are you going to consecrate as you leave this worship gathering and continue to function as priest through Jesus Christ? What are you going to offer to God in worship at your home, at your work, in your school, with your friends?

So go and consecrate something today - your Sunday lunch, your car, your video games, your computers, your smart phones and tablets, your house, your furniture, your clothes, your bank account, your friendships, your children, your husband, your wife, your health... you get the idea.

This is biblical, anticipated and expected. The Lord himself has foretold it in Zechariah 14:20 *“On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the Lord’s house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the Lord Almighty.”*

Brothers and sisters there is nothing too mundane or insignificant in all of God’s good creation that can’t be used to present your daily worship as a Priest, neither is there anything that is more important or significant than your weekly participation in worship as the Body of our Great High Priest.

So, given all that we’ve heard this morning brothers and sisters – I wonder if we started off with the right question. Perhaps its not really about what we expect in worship... actually it most definitely is not about what we expect in worship, its about what God expects in worship.

Praise and thanksgiving be to Jesus that because He is our great High Priest, because He had redeemed the office of Priest that we are able to offer God the worship He expects from us, for His praise, and His glory – forever and ever, because... Jesus is... Priest! Amen.