



Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

November 7, 2021

* *Please stand if you are able*

Prelude: "All Who Hunger Gather Gladly"

arr. Mark Albrecht

Gathering

WELCOME & LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Acolyte: Jesus Christ is the light of the world. We light this candle as a sign that Christ has come and Christ will come again. As the light pushes back darkness let us walk with, learn from, and worship Jesus Christ.

* CALL TO WORSHIP

Liturgist: Since we have a great priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus Christ the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

All: For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who had been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet did not sin.

Liturgist: Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:14-16

All: Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Psalm 124:8

* **All Singing: 776 "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"**

* GOD'S GREETING

* GOD'S PEOPLE GREETING ONE ANOTHER

* **All Singing:** “Light the Fire”

**I stand to praise you, but I fall on my knees
My spirit is willing, but my flesh is weak**

**So, light the fire (light the fire) in my soul (in my weary soul)
Fan the flame (fan the flame) make me whole (make my spirit whole)
Lord, you know (you know) where I am (where I am)
So, light the fire in my soul again**

*Children ages 2–7 may come forward for a brief word and blessing
before they leave for “God Loves Me” and “Children in Worship.”*

CHILDREN’S BLESSING

Children: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also, with you.

Reconciliation

Liturgist: Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

All: And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

Liturgist: 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... You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

All: Son, though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest.

Hebrews: 5:1-9 adopted

Liturgist: Lord, hear us as we pray:

All: Gracious God, our sins are too heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo. We need an intercessor, someone who knows our weakness. We need mercy. We need forgiveness.

Silent Confession and Lament

Liturgist: Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

Hebrews 7:27

* **All Singing:** 177 “Oh, to See the Dawn”

Liturgist: Mark 12:28-34

Proclamation

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

All Singing: 892 “Be Still and Know”

Soloist singing once, all singing twice

Scripture: Hebrews 9:11-15

Minister: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon: The Last Blood Shed

- * **All Singing: 704 “The Blood that Jesus Shed for Me”**
Soloist singing first verse and refrain, all joining for second verse

INSTITUTION
THANKSGIVING
INVITATION
COMMUNION

All Singing: 818 “Eat This Bread”
174 “I Stand Amazed”

ACCLAMATION

- * **All Singing: 831 “Alleluia! Sing to Jesus”**
Singing verses 1 and 4

Dedication

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Liturgist: With joy, let us now offer our gifts, in music, heart, and resource, as a sign of our deep devotion and covenant faithfulness.

OFFERING

1. General Fund
2. Denominational Ministry Shares

Soloist: “Rescue Me”

If I were to say no to You would you listen?
Would You find me if I sailed across the sea?
If I were to dive into the deepest canyon
Would You be at the bottom to rescue me?

Where can I go where Your eyes can't follow?
What can I do to make You let go of my hand?
You say there is nothing in all of creation
That can separate me from the love of the great I AM.

If I were to show You all the places I am broken?
If You were to see all the things I hide away
Would there still be a place for me at your table?
Would I still be your child at the end of the day?

O Holy God Your love has found me.
O God Your grace has set me free.
O Holy God I can feel Your hand upon me.
Oh God, have mercy on me.

Oh God will You rescue me?

- * **All Singing: 394 “All Praise to You, My God, This Night”**
Singing verse 4

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below.
Praise him above, you heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Sending

* BENEDICTION

Minister: Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Hebrews 13:20-21 adapted

Postlude: "Amazing Grace"

Worship Leaders

Organist / Flutist:	Lynn Hollender	Acolyte:	Rowan Van Wyngarden
Pianist / Vocalist:	Erin Pacheco	Liturgist:	Kim Ottenhoff
Vocalist:	Marjie Coleman	Prayer:	Gerrit Veenstra
Alto Saxophone:	Danielle Murawski		
Postlude Pianist:	Karis Dykstra		
Minister:	Roger Nelson		

Hymns are from *Lift Up Your Hearts* (Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2013)
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Text: Hebrews 9: 11-15
Title: The Last Blood Shed
Date: 11.07.21
Roger Allen Nelson

I can still hear her disbelief when, with all the indignation that a junior high school girl could muster, our daughter voiced her astonishment that Southwest Chicago Christian Schools did not get the day off for Yom Kippur. In her public school experience, you always got Yom Kippur off. She couldn't understand why Christian schools wouldn't do the same.

She was flabbergasted!
This was incredulous!
She was getting gypped!

I was reminded that she expressed the same sense of injustice when her Catholic girlfriends got presents and white dresses at their first communion. Again, cheated as a Protestant!

But, my guess is, even today, that our daughter would reconsider her stance on Yom Kippur if she knew what was involved.

Yom Kippur is the English shorthand for *Yom HaKippurim* – Hebrew for “Day of the Atonements.” It’s a 25 hour period set aside to atone for the sins of the past year. As a complete Sabbath there’s no work or school, but there’s also no eating, drinking, washing, or the wearing of cosmetics or leather shoes. And, any conjugal relations are prohibited. Most of the day is spent in the synagogue in prayer. In Orthodox synagogues the services begin in the early morning and continue until mid-afternoon. Then the faithful usually break for a nap, before returning in the late afternoon for services which last until nightfall.

The rites for Yom Kippur are initially detailed in the 16th chapter of Leviticus, where God gives instructions for how Aaron (the priest) is to enter into God’s presence once a year to make atonement for the sins of the Israelites. In its practice Yom Kippur is meant to absolve people from sins against God, not sins against other people. Therefore, before this Day of Atonement, you are to mend broken relationships, resolve disputes, and seek reconciliation with others. Yom Kippur is set aside to seek forgiveness from God.

So, as described in Leviticus, the priest was to:

wash his whole body – not just his hands and feet,
dress in a white linen tunic and clean white underwear,
sacrifice a bull,
fill a censer with burning coals and two handfuls of incense,
enter the Holy of Holies – where the Ark of God and the mercy seat reside,
sprinkle the bull’s blood before the mercy seat,
cast lots over two goats – one to be slaughtered and one to be a scapegoat,
sacrifice the one goat and sprinkle its blood before the mercy seat,
sprinkle a mix of bull’s blood and goat’s blood on an external altar,
lay hands on the other goat before casting it into the wilderness,
wash again and put on regular robes,

burn all of what's left of the bull and the goat...

It was an elaborate ritual of smoke and smells and symbols that dramatized the chasm between God and humanity. It was meant to capture the price that sin demands, demonstrate our inability to pay our own way, and it turned the temple into a bloody butcher shop. But underneath all this ritual rigmarole there's an economy - a means of exchange. Simply put:

Sin separates humanity from God.

God demands a sacrifice to pay (atone) for sin.

These actions satisfy God's demand – at least for a year.

There is something about this that seems so primordial and brutal. In it's hocus pocus, mystery, and bloody mess it is a million miles away from a text-messaging junior high girl, or a few friends enjoying a beer,

or a family trying to juggle bills and schedules,

or a young teacher doing her best to develop a lesson plan,

or a retired gentlemen looking forward to a round of golf,

or the unbearable racket of what passes as political discourse.

There's something about this atonement ritual that seems archaic and out of touch with our modern-cosmopolitan-rational-sensibilities. It suggests a God who is angry with the failings of people and whose wrath is quenched by blood.

Now. The traditional Christian answer is that the Day of Atonement is a preliminary economy of God, but that in and through Jesus Christ there is a new means of exchange.

What was incomplete, and repetitive, and ultimately ineffectual is replaced by a different system of atonement.

What was symbolic and temporary is replaced by a sacrifice that is real and eternal.

In our text in Hebrews, Jesus is both interceding priest and self-giving sacrifice. Jesus, in dying and spiritually sprinkling his blood on an eternal altar, makes satisfaction for our sins. In dying Jesus doesn't wrench something from God and in forgiving God doesn't begrudge something to Jesus. Rather, in love, in self-giving-sacrifice, God in Christ satisfies the demands of his own economy.

Jesus is our substitute.

The blood of Jesus pays our debt.

Thanks be to God.

But this understanding of the cross involves buying the cosmology.

You have to be invested in that economy of God.

Martha Tatarnic, an Anglican rector, tells the story of trying to explain the sacrifice of Jesus to her brother. She writes:

I knew as the words were coming out of my mouth that they weren't landing. I knew that I was missing something really important in how I had interpreted Jesus' sacrifice. I felt dumber and dumber as Andrew, showing little interest in what I had just said, toppled my

evangelical offering with a few disdainful words. “That doesn’t make any sense,” he said after he let me fizzle out. “God sounds really terrible. Why would God need sacrifice? And why would God’s son be the kind of sacrifice he wants?”

I’m reminded how Mel Gibson’s movie “The Passion of the Christ” gloried in the bloody mess of it all. In an orgy of violence Jesus is whipped and pummeled and nailed and gored into a quivering pulp. The violence was so mind numbing that finally there was little more than a carcass hanging on a tree – with all the humanity beaten out of it.

But, the undercurrent of the movie is that God in Christ loves you so much that he bore that violence on your behalf. The emphasis is on the substitutionary sacrifice where God satisfies his own demands. God can’t ignore your sin and God can’t stop loving you – so freely and willfully God in Christ suffers and dies for you....

And yet, the undercurrent under that current is that God demands or endorses or orchestrates a redemptive violence. Blood for blood. Life for death. Death for life.

Some of you may remember that in the “Chronicles of Narnia” the evil powers imprisoned creatures by turning them into stone. Edmund – the naughty one who stumbles through the wardrobe – aides the dark side, but eventually he is to be sacrificially slaughtered. However, he’s rescued at the last minute and returns to fight on the side of the Aslan, the Christ-lion. But, then under a truce the evil powers insist that Edmund be handed over to them for there must be retribution for every treachery. Death for death.

Aslan agrees to take Edmund’s place and be handed over to death, on the condition that the evil powers renounce their claim on Edmund’s life.

Theologian Mark Heim, summarizes it this way:

There is an ancient stone altar on which Edmund was to be killed, and upon which Aslan is actually sacrificed. The act has a mysterious, sacred aura and an air of inevitability. The evil powers love this arrangement, and incidentally, have no intention of keeping their bargain. Once Aslan is dead, they intend to kill those he meant to save...

When Aslan rises from the dead, the ancient stone altar on which the sacrifice was offered cracks and crumbles in pieces, never to be used again. The substitution of Aslan for Edmund cannot save if it is simply a variation on the same sacrificial theme rather than an act to overthrow the process altogether. The stained stone may have been the center piece of religion and sacred awe in human history. But it was not God’s altar. The gospel is not ultimately about exchange of victims, but about ending bloodshed.

There is something remarkably visceral and violent at the heart of the gospel. It’s not just wispy spirit and celestial seasoning. It is undeniably brutal and bloody. In time and space and body, God enters into human history and dies.

But, could it be that part of what happens in Christ on the cross is that the whole apparatus of sacrifice and violent redemption is eradicated? Once and for all, all of it is

done away with. Not only are our sins atoned for, but the whole economy of satisfaction is replaced by an economy of mercy. This is the end. This is the last blood shed.

Dear friends, no matter what your sin,
no matter how you are broken,
no matter what wardrobe in which you've stumbled,
no matter how God is grieved,
your sins are atoned for in Christ.
The way that leads to death is destroyed.
Ours is a living merciful God.
Thanks be to God.

Now that seems like something we should celebrate.
Maybe even with a day off school.
Amen.