

5 reasons to be encouraged this week

1. Jesus is your priest
2. Jesus saves
3. Jesus saves completely
4. Jesus saves only those who come to God through Jesus
5. Jesus is always praying for you

Introduction: Well, what an interesting format for church today. I thank God that even though we could not meet in person that what an incredible blessing that God has given us to be able to meet virtually. This is unheard of hundreds of years ago! What Christians during the Black Plague during the medieval ages would have given to be able to meet virtually during a pandemic!

Speaking of pandemic, this is the reason why we're doing this virtually isn't it? Thousands are getting sick, many countries are shutting down. While China is recovering, Italy is being hit hard due to lack of hospital care and bedding. Some people are panicking.. I went to Aldi to buy groceries and I could you not the entire meat section was empty. But not only the meat section, the cleaning supplies, the paper towels, toilet paper were all gone. Some of us are mocking thinking that people are overreacting and that this virus is the same as the flu. A lot of confusion.

What confusing and challenging times. We don't know what will happen next. But as usual we're here again every Sunday to be encouraged as we go back out into the world (or stay home!)

Transition: So here are 5 reasons to be encouraged this week. 5 reasons to continue moving forward despite all the fears and worries what may happen in the future.

1. Jesus is your priest

Transition: But before you can be encouraged, that Jesus is your priest we first have to understand correctly what is a priest?

v.23- **The former priests were many in number** – The OT priests were commanded by God to maintain the temple, perform sacrifices, and to act as mediators between God and the nation of Israel. There was also a high priest who was the leader of the priests. He would enter the Holy of

Holies in the temple, which is a restricted area in the temple that only the high priest could enter once a year in order to ask for forgiveness to God for nation of Israel. This phrase we just read explains that there were many priests.

Transition: And why were there many priests?

Because they were prevented by death from continuing in office – Since the priesthood had to go on, when priests died they had to be replaced. So in the history of Israel there were many priests and high priests because priests died and could not continue being priests.

It's sort of similar to how we've had 45 presidents only they stopped being president due to their limited terms. However, in Israel, if you were a priest, you were priest for life so there's the difference. But both in Israel and the United States there has never been only one president nor only one priest because death stops them from their service.

Transition: But you are probably asking, "Ok so we there were many priests back in Israel's time because they died. So what? Why do we need a priest anyway?"

The answer is that you cannot worship God without a priest.

To see this look at Ezra 8:15-20

¹⁵ I gathered them to the river that runs to Ahava, and there we camped three days. As I reviewed the people and the priests, **I found there none of the sons of Levi.** ¹⁶ Then I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, leading men, and for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were men of insight, ¹⁷ and sent them to Iddo, the leading man at the place Casiphia, telling them what to say to Iddo and his brothers and the temple servants at the place Casiphia, namely, **to send us ministers for the house of our God.** ¹⁸ **And by the good hand of our God on us,** they brought us a man of discretion, of the sons of Mahli **the son of Levi,** son of Israel, namely Sherebiah with his sons and kinsmen, ¹⁸; ¹⁹ also Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, with his kinsmen and their sons, ²⁰; ²⁰ besides 220 of the temple servants, whom David and his officials had set apart to attend the Levites. These were all mentioned by name. ¹

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ezr 8:15–20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Ezra was being used by God to lead exiled Israelites from Babylon to Jerusalem. He went to lead the reconstruction of the temple which was destroyed at this time. What is critical in this passage we just read, is that Ezra painstakingly looked for a Levite, as only Levites could only be priests. At first he could not find any Levites as seen in v.15. But then finally Ezra says, “by the good hand of our God on us” they found Sherebiah who was a Levite.

Sounds a bit dramatic doesn't it? “By the good hand of our god.” No. Ezra understood very well that without a priest there could be no worship. The priest was supposed to be the bridge between man and God, and with no bridge there could be no connection.

Without priests no worship could be done. Without a priest to sacrifice a bull for your sins you cannot connect to God. Without a priest to pray for your sins you could not connect God.

Illustration: In many other religions this is well known. In Roman Catholicism, Catholics would ensure that they would have a priest with them on their death bed so that they could have last rites which is a final act of piety, such asking God forgiveness as their last act on earth to hopefully get to heaven.

When I used to be Roman Catholic my whenever I had deep questions about the Bible they would always say ask the priest. Talk to the priest. Why do we this? You should talk to the priest. Can I do this? I don't know ask the priest. This might sound laughable to us Christians. I mean when was the last time you thought about a priest being a vital link to reach God? Maybe never. We Christians hardly ever think about priests in our day to day lives. But the Roman Catholics while are wrong on fundamental things, are right that a priest is necessary. In fact it's essential.

Transition: And now hopefully you start to see why it is so encouraging that Jesus is your priest. Which is our first reason to be encouraged this week is that Jesus is your priest.

v.24- **but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.** – In contrast to the OT priests, Jesus is high priest forever because he cannot die. He's God.

Illustration: Imagine you wanted to talk to Bill Gates. How impossible is that? He has people constantly emailing him, calling him, to do business, for advice, probably begging him for some money... Your phone call to him is probably 1 out of 200 in a day. A drop in the ocean.

But then guess what.. Bill Gates is your dad. You don't have to worry that your email, your call, or your letter by pigeon carrier won't get through! He's your dad! You can probably go bother him in the living room while he's in his trunks and it would be no problem because he's your dad!

Now parallel this with God. He's so far above all the heavens and earth. You can't even see him. He dwells in absolute holiness with thousands of angels. One little speck of sin is destroyed before him. The only way you could ever connect to him is if a priest could perform the sacrifice for your sins and pray for you. Sounds simple right? Now go and find a priest, but remember he has to be from the tribe of Levi.

To this day, all records of Israelite genealogies are lost. It would literally be impossible to find a modern descendent of Levi today. Even if you were to go to Israel, you could never really know, it would all be speculation.

So basically the only way you could ever connect to God, the Levite's... that bridge is burned down.

But. Good news. Jesus is your priest! That's right the very God that you are trying to connect to.. that very God who you need a priest to get to, is also your priest! God who requires a priest to worship happens to also be your priest!

Application: Be encouraged this week that the void of a priesthood that we experience as Christians today is provided by God himself! God said, "You have no priest, then I will be your priest!"

You Christian, unlike every other person in the world have a bridge to God! You have access to God that no one else has because Jesus is your priest! Be grateful and encouraged that you don't have to worry about God not hearing you because you have direct access to him because Jesus is your bridge, your ladder, your priest!

Transition: The second reason to be encouraged

2. Jesus saves

v.25- **Consequently he is able to save** – Because Jesus is permanently high priest he has the power to save people. Remember, no priest no worship. No connection to God. Which also means, no priest no salvation. Go and try to find a high priest. You will find that there is none in Israel.

This is because Jesus is constantly in the immediate presence of the Father. He has the Father's ear. He sits at his right hand and so he is able to directly communicate with God on behalf of sinners.

In addition, the high priest had to make a sacrifice for the sins of Israel and for himself to enter God's presence. Jesus as our high priest has made a perfect and complete sacrifice on the cross that accomplishes salvation. When Jesus said, "It is finished" he announced that his sacrifice completes the work of salvation and that anyone who believes in him is saved.

In John 5:21 Jesus says,

²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.²

Jesus gives life to whoever he wants to because he is the high priest. He alone is the one who can sacrifice for your sins, he is the only one who can intercede for you, he is the only one who can save you because he is high priest. There are no other high priests. Only Jesus.

Illustration: A CEO of a company has ultimate decision power. He could hire a random stranger on the street and it would bypass the whole interview process. He could fire your director who has been at the company for 20 years! The only reason why he can do such a thing is because his title, his office is CEO.

Likewise, because Jesus is high priest he has the power to save whom he chooses. The high priest is the one who sacrifices for the sins of the people, he is the one who enters God's

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 5:21). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

presence in order to pray for the people so that God would listen. That is Jesus' office. High priest. He is able to save because he is the high priest.

Application: These are dark and evil times. The world is full of pain and suffering. Worry, fear, doubt. Death. Sports leagues are shutting down. The only relief many people get, entertainment is being put on hiatus.

The only ray of hope, the only light in this world, is that because Jesus is high priest, Jesus saves! If you are feeling pain, worry, because of illness or difficult trials, remember that Jesus saves! Jesus can save you from your sin, from this sinful world and give you a whole new joy, hope, and life, in him that is not dependent on any circumstance! Jesus saves!

3. Jesus saves completely

To the uttermost – Not only can Jesus save you because he's high priest, but He also saves completely.

It's not he *might* be able to save you. Or he is possibly able to save you. No, it is to the uttermost. It is to the absolute. To the highest certainty that you can think of even greater than 100%. Jesus' power to save is not 99% it's 1000%.

When John wrote to troubled Christians in 1 Jn 5:13 he wrote,

¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life³.

John says you can know, not probably know, but know with complete certainty that you have eternal life. He knows Jesus' power to save is completely.

Paul also wrote in 1 Co 1:4-9,

⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Jn 5:13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁴

Paul giving thanks to God for his work in the Corinthians noted that Jesus Christ will sustain or confirm you to the end. Not only is Jesus' power to save absolute it also keeps you from losing your salvation. Jesus will ensure your salvation.

Illustration: Have you ever thought for a split second that if you dropped a pencil, that it won't fall down? That it will stay floating mid-air? No you know for certain that the pencil will drop!

Jesus' power to save is absolute, is as certain as the Golden State Warriors winning a championship when they got Kevin Durant.

Just kidding.

His power to save is as certain as gravity pulling you back down when you jump.

Application: Do you really believe Jesus can you save you completely? Or do you keep trying to add works?

And if you are struggling and you are unsure whether you are really saved or not, I want you to know that if you put your faith in Christ, your salvation is perfect, absolute, and certain. Be encouraged this week knowing with 100% certainty that you are saved no matter what happens.

Transition: But who are those whom Jesus saves as high priest with his absolute saving power? This leads to the 4th reason to be encouraged..

4. Jesus only saves those who come to God through Jesus

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Co 1:4–9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Those who draw near to God through him – Those who come through Jesus to God are saved. Those who do not come to God through Jesus cannot be saved. As we know, having a high priest is the only way one can be saved and since Jesus is the only high priest, those who do not come to him cannot be saved.

Jesus' salvation is exclusive to only those who come to him.

Jesus said to Thomas in John 14:6,

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."⁵

Because Jesus himself is the way, truth and the life, all other ways are false broken bridges to death.

Paul wrote in 1 Tim 2:5,

⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,⁶

Those who go through Buddha, Mohamed, or the Pope cannot come to the Father. Neither of those religions have Jesus, God's only high priest.

Illustration: The Yungas Road was built in the 1930s in Bolivia to connect to the high mountains with the lowlands. It was very dangerous actually named as the death road. The roads are extremely narrow, landslides often occurred, and drops were thousands of meters meaning certain death if you slipped. In the 1990s a truck fell off due to fog and people were killed. So why did people go on this road? Because it was the only way between two cities up until 2006 when new roads were built. For almost 80 years this road was the only way to get to where you wanted to go.

Likewise, Jesus is the only way to heaven. No matter how dangerous the Jesus road is, it is the only road in existence that gets you to heaven.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 14:6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Ti 2:5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Application: Have you ever crossed a high bridge, or been atop a high building? Someone says don't look down, you look down and now you want to go back to the first floor?

It's so easy when we're traveling a difficult road to look back and turn around.

But no matter how hard it is, you can know for certain that at least you're on the right and only road. No matter what is going on in the world with the virus, keep going you're on the right road. No matter how painfully long it feels, since you're on the road to heaven even if it doesn't feel like that, you'll eventually be there. It's only a matter of time. You're getting closer and closer. Have faith you're on the right road.

Transition: Next looks look at the 5th reason to be encouraged: Jesus is always praying for you. Which is actually the topic I was assigned, "How does Jesus pray?" The answer is that he is *always* praying for you.

Since he always lives to make intercession for them- The high priest' job in Israel was to enter the holy of holies in the temple, which was an area that could only be accessed one a year and sacrifice had to be made first for sin before he could enter. Once he entered he would pray for the nation of Israel and for forgiveness of sins.

Now since Jesus is high priest, he made the ultimate sacrifice by dying on the cross. He is now in the presence of God constantly. So unlike a normal high priest who could only come into God's presence once a year, Jesus has unlimited access.

So what is Jesus doing up there? Is he just chilling lounging on a nice sofa?

No Jesus is praying for you, even right now.

Transition: We will see this as we break down this phrase.

Since – This word indicates that this phrase causes the previous verses. In other words, Jesus is God's only high priest, he alone can save absolutely those who come to him, because of the next phrase...

He always lives to make intercession for them – It is because of Jesus’ constant intercession that salvation is possible. Because once Jesus died for you, you can now access God, but what if you sin? We still sin because we still live in the sinful flesh! The only way we can ever stay faithful to God in the end is because Jesus is always praying for us!

He always lives refers to Jesus making it his entire life to pray for you *always*. He is always around, he cannot die, nothing can stop him from praying for you. Three nails can’t stop him, a spear can’t stop him, nothing can stop Jesus praying for you. Jesus has made it his life to pray for always.

To make intercession for them refers to Jesus’ life dedicated to praying for believers. Sin separates us from God and because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for us and his continual prayers for us, he is able to appease the Father’s righteous wrath on us and plead for us to the Father. He is able to intervene the Father’s wrath and make peace between us and God through his prayers.

“Them” refers to “those who draw near to God” in the earlier phrase. Jesus is always praying for believers.

Jesus says in John 6:39,

39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

Jesus loses not a single believer God has given to him because he is always praying for them.

Illustration: So many times over the span of my Christian walk where I’ve gotten angry or worried about things.

Times like when I some driver in the highway cuts me off, or drives in such a dangerous way where it causes risk to my life. I feel angry, road rage. I want to cut the driver off to and exact vengeance on him. But I stop. Why? It’s only natural that I act upon my anger isn’t it? Instead I start to realize that I need to relax and forgive the person. The only explanation as to why I did not act how I felt was because Jesus was praying for me.

I remember a time when I lost a job in the first couple months of being married to Maybelle. It was so tough. If I didn't get a job in the 2 months how was I going to pay the rent? So I dealt with a lot of worry and pain during the time. Obviously I did find a job praise the Lord otherwise I probably wouldn't be here! But what got me through those 2 difficult months was that Jesus was praying for me. Why was I still believing? I have seen many fake Christians that once a trial comes up they stop coming to church. They stop believing because they thought the Christian life is just prosperity and no challenges! Why didn't I do the same? If God was not providing for me why should I continue worshipping him? That would've been the most logical thing to do! If a knife becomes dull and can't cut any more why keep using? It will only cut me if I continue using it. I move on to something else that can help me!

But I had a steady certainty that God would provide. And it had nothing to do with my faith or prayers, I still faced temptation of worry and giving up. No, the only thing that caused me to remain calm and be steady was that Jesus was praying for me. It was truly irrational, truly supernatural.

And I'm sure as Christians you've had many times you've asked yourself, "man why am I still a Christian? I can't believe I'm still believing right now. This makes no sense!" You are still believing because Jesus is constantly praying for you!

Application: No matter what pain, trial, and suffering you are facing, remember that Jesus is praying for you! He will get you through it! You can have hope that Jesus' prayer will get you through this!

Illustration: In the first few months when I became a Christian I eventually met a Christian man named Tito Doy. Some of you might know him that's why I mention his name. He knew my mother and uncle. When he saw me attending church and teaching the Bible he was shocked. He told me that he has been praying for me for a very long time! He said he would see me when I used to work at a Starbucks in Target and he would pray for my mother and that God would save me. When I was working at Starbucks I was not a Christian. I was suffering with much pain and on top of that I had to make drinks for 10 customers at a time by myself, and close the store by myself. Those were dark times. But what's funny was that I have never seen Doy when I worked at Starbucks. I didn't know this man existed. Yet he knew me even though I didn't know him. He saw me making frappuccinos and lattes but I did not see him. Yet he was praying salvation for me and my mother.

In the same way, we never realize that Jesus is always praying for us.

Application: Even if you go through the most difficult and darkest times, and you forget everything you heard in this sermon, and you forget that Jesus is always praying for you, that doesn't change the fact that he is still praying for you. Have hope. Jesus will never let you go.

Transition: Finally, we will conclude on this note.

The author of Hebrews wrote in ch.4:14-16

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. ⁷

Gospel presentation

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 4:14–16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.