

## It's About Christ

### *Psalm 111; Hebrews 7:23-28*

The passage I read for you a few minutes ago reads inauspiciously if, like me, you are a 61 year old clergyman. It says in Hebrews, "*The old priests were many in number because death prevented them from continuing in office.*" Thank you, Lord, for that encouraging word! But it is true that one of the conundrums of life among God's people is that, in both Old Testament and New, God appoints mere, ordinary men and women like you and me to hold sacred office. What we do in Church is sacred even while what we are is, all too often, ordinary.

Because Church is the place where what is human and ordinary collides with what is timeless and eternal and true. For months, our confirmands have been pounding into mind and heart timeless truths, straight from heaven: the Ten Commandments, four commandments about God, six about us and each other, the Apostles' Creed, all about God, Father and Son, Spirit and then finally us, the Church, John 3:16, about God's love, Romans 3:23, about our sin, Romans 6:23; about Christ and grace and life, all those true and eternal things that will save our souls if we take them to heart and believe them.

And one of the reasons it's so necessary to rehearse what is timeless and eternal and true is that what goes on here among God's people is often so ordinary and human and difficult. What does Hebrews say, "*The old priests were many in number because death prevented them from continuing in office... the old law appointed men in their weakness as priests.*" The point being that the life God wants us to live together as his people is not sustainable by human efforts and human qualities.

When I was at seminary, they tried to teach us how to stir God's people into motion and action. First, you gotta tell them why it matters! Second, you gotta tell them what it says! Third, you gotta teach them how to do it in their daily lives. Its not bad advice and I often try to follow it when I speak. But I had a professor who warned us to think twice about prescribing applications to people.

He said that there are passages in the Bible where we are commanded and exhorted to do this and be that. But he went on to say that most passages in the Bible aren't about us or anything we should do. Most passages in the Bible are about God and Christ and the point of reading them is that when we know about God and Christ in detail and love and appreciate God and Christ, then the Spirit can use what we know to guide us in our relationships and our circum-stances day by day.

Think about it! How many situations do we face in life for which we have no specific commands from Scripture? Why did Jesus wash the disciples' feet at the Last Supper? Was it about personal hygiene? Or was he teaching an intangible about how authority and servanthood interweave? Why did Paul exhort women in Corinth to cover their heads at Communion

services? Was it about fashion? Or was it some other intangible about men and women, authority and relationship that we don't understand and still need to learn. The Bible is full of intangibles God sent to speak to our hearts.

Did you hear what Hebrews said about Jesus today? He's different from "*the old priests*" men and women like you and me. Christ is "*holy*", just like his Father, "*innocent*", never did anything wrong. He is "*separated from sinners*". Jesus never followed the crowd in the wrong direction. He is "*exalted above the heavens*". He looked like a carpenter, but now he rules the universe.

In our Call to Worship, the 111th Psalm, God is mentioned 14 times in 10 verse. So this is a psalm about God. Humanity is mentioned only twice. In the first verse, the authors tells himself to worship God and in the last verse he tells us to fear him. The point being that, if we're paying attention to who God is, it ought to make us a little afraid. Because the fear of God teaches us the love of God.

We ought to be afraid to miss church. We ought to be afraid to follow people who pull us away from God. We ought to be afraid to disrespect our parents, afraid to take what isn't ours, afraid to lie, afraid to want what isn't ours and doesn't belong to us. If we're not a little afraid at this table, we haven't really understood what we're playing at. But if you are afraid, this is the place where you can be loved and forgiven and helped by God.