

Our Life at the Face of God

25th Sunday after Pentecost [Proper 27b]

November 11, 2018

Hebrews 9:24-28

²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

In the Name of Jesus.

Christ has shed on the cross the blood to atone for the sins of every sinner.

John the prophet had baptized Christ in the Jordan, and Jesus walked away from that baptism as the Lamb of God bearing the sins of the world. From his baptism, he is now on the way to the cross clothed in the sins of every sinner of every generation, including the sins of you and me. In willingly giving himself to the death of the cross, he gave the sacrifice to atone for every sinner of every generation.

Having shed the holy blood of atonement on the cross, Christ has taken that sacrifice and presented to his Father in Heaven. Now the atonement for every sinner is an established fact at the face of God.
Hebrews 9:24:

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into Heaven itself, now to appear at the face of God on our behalf.

At the face of God his Father in Heaven, on our behalf, for our benefit, Christ has appeared, in order to present the blood atoning for our sin. At the face of his Father, Christ speaks the words justifying you and me.

We make no more sacrifice—you and I have nothing to add. There is nothing else we can present. What Christ did is full, sufficient, and, as Hebrews says, *is the sacrifice offered once to bear the sins of many*. [Hebrews 9:28]

The fact is accomplished; the verdict is final; our condemnation is finished and over.

Now, we wait. We wait for Christ, who will come to Earth again, appearing a second time, the final time, to deal not with sin—for that has been fully accomplished and taken up into the heavenly Throne, before the face of God—but appearing in order to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. [Hebrews 9:28]

There is nothing to give the Christian more comfort and confidence than this verdict declared in Heaven, this word of the justification of the sinner spoken by Christ at the face of God his Father.

There is nothing giving more joy than this knowledge that in Heaven, at the face of God, Christ stands in our stead, interceding for us, even saying to his Father, *Of those you have given me, I have lost not one*. [John 17:12]

There is nothing the sinner on Earth needs to hear more, again and again, than that the ruling made in Heaven is that the sinner is purified by the atoning blood.

So on Earth, the scribes and teachers of the Law walk around in long robes and have the best seats where they are seen by all.

Why do they want to be seen in their long robes by all? Because they concern themselves not with how they stand at the face of God, but with how they stand at the face of people.

They are religious in public all day, making long prayers [Mark 12:40], for they are concerned with not how they stand not at the face of God, but with how they stand at the face of their neighbors. They don't even hold back from devouring widows' houses, because building-up and protecting your wealth is important for your standing at the face of other people, and the widow has no standing anyway.

Meanwhile, there is the widow. She's poor. [Mark 12:41] She has no one to take care of her. She stands before her neighbor not as someone to receive honor, but as a nuisance.

That's how she stands at the face of her neighbor. But how does she stand at the face of God?

So we look at her and find her giving an offering of thankfulness to God. An offering of all that she had. Not much, not enough to impress at the face of her neighbors, but, out of her poverty, everything she had.

An offering of thankfulness.

Why an offering of thankfulness? Her bank account is blank, her house does not impress, her clothing can't stand up to the fine robes of the scribes, her food is, what?, probably bread and water?

She gives an offering of thankfulness. For she knows how she stands at the face of God. At the face of her neighbors, it's no pretty picture. But at the face of God, she stands in the righteousness of Christ Jesus.

Jesus was baptized into this, to be the Lamb of God who takes away her sin, to be the high-priest who presents the atoning sacrifice for her at the heavenly throne, to be the Holy One of Israel who intercedes for her to his Father—Jesus was baptized into being her Lord.

At the face of God, the words spoken about her are not to recount her shame, not to come up with a plan for how she can change her life, but at the heavenly throne, the conversation of Jesus with his Father on behalf of the widow are the words him entering the holy place with the sacrifice of his own blood and declaring, *Father, of those you have given me, I have lost not one. She belongs to me, Father, and she is clean.*

²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into Heaven itself, now to appear at the face of God on our behalf.

[Hebrews 9:24]

We, along with the widow, stand at the face of God.

We stand in the righteousness of Jesus. Jesus was baptized into that, into being clothed in our unrighteousness, into being the Lamb of God to take away our sin.

He is the high-priest who, on our behalf, presents the atoning sacrifice for us at the heavenly throne. He is the holy One of Israel, who has baptized us into being his people, into being the true Israel of God, and he now intercedes for us to his Father.

At the face of God, the words Jesus speaks on our behalf are not to recount our shame, nor to design ways we can change our lives or something like that, but at the heavenly throne, the conversation of Jesus with his Father on our behalf are the words of him entering the holy place and declaring, *Father, of those you have given me, I have lost not one. These whom I gather on Earth to the gift of my Body and Blood, they belong to me, Father, they are clean.*

In that confidence, we wait. We wait, knowing that Christ, having been offered once to bear our sins, will appear again, not to deal with sins, but to save those who belong to him and are waiting for him.

As we wait, the offerings we bring are not in sacrifice—for that was the cross—but in the confidence of thankfulness.

In the Name of Jesus.