



Growth Group Curriculum Lent 2021  
Week 4 – March 14, 2021 – Hebrews 4:14-5:10

**Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. In this time of the virus and social distancing, please meet safely outside or online. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at [connect@ljpres.org](mailto:connect@ljpres.org). Thank you for loving and caring for each other.**

In Hebrews 4-5 we see an important title ascribed to Jesus - the great high priest. The title of high priest is not one that is new or unfamiliar in scripture. We see it first given to Aaron as he is called to be the high priest for the people of Israel after they flee Egypt. This role continues within the Israelite community through the line of Aaron and the tribe of Levi.

There are two main qualifications to be a high priest. First, every high priest must be divinely appointed to their role, and secondly, they must be able to empathize with the people they represent. We see Aaron's divine appointment in Exodus 28, as God instructs Moses on the duties and responsibilities of the priests of Israel. Aaron is called out among the priests to be the one who carries the weight of the Israelites sin into the presence of God. In doing this, Aaron empathizes with the people because he is one of the people.

This tradition of the high priest continues throughout scripture, until the time of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection when Jesus becomes the eternal high priest. The first glimpse of Jesus as the high priest is found at his baptism. God declares Jesus as his own son. Through the act of baptism, Jesus puts himself at the disposal of the will of God. Even though he is without sin, he chooses to associate with sinners. This allows him to meet one of the qualifications of being a high priest: empathizing with the people he would represent.

Jesus is "divinely called" to be the high priest through the fulfillment of prophecy presented in Psalm 110:4, which states: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek'." Not only is he given the title of high priest, but he is also declared as king, just like Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18.

The implications of Jesus being our high priest and also our king are numerous, but two are worth noting. The first is that we are also called into a priesthood of righteousness. This priesthood is modeled for us in the high priesthood of Jesus Christ. In the same way that Jesus is able to empathize with us in our weaknesses and



experiences, we are called to do the same for others. Through this empathy Jesus was able to practice acts of justice, mercy, and love.

The second implication is found in how we pray. In Hebrews 5:7 we read, “Jesus 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.” Because Jesus was divinely ordained as the high priest, he had confidence and humility while praying. The invitation to pray, as Christ did, extends to us. We are called to pray as an act of obedience and submission, to the will of God. In doing this, we can be confident that our prayers are being shaped by the Holy Spirit, understood by Jesus the high priest, and heard by God the Father.

## Exploring the Text

### Read Hebrews 4:14-5:10

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. <sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. <sup>2</sup> He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. <sup>3</sup> This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. <sup>4</sup> And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was. <sup>5</sup> 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.” <sup>6</sup> And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered <sup>9</sup> and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him <sup>10</sup> and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

## Questions

*If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.*

1. A week ago, we talked about sabbath and rest. Did you make time this week to rest or take sabbath? If so, what did that look like?
2. In Hebrews 4:14, the preacher reminds the congregation to hold on firmly to their faith. This community is experiencing pushback and persecution as they seek to follow Jesus. When you experience struggles, what helps you to “hold on firmly to the faith?”
3. Hebrews 4:16 tells us to approach the throne of God with confidence. What does that look like? How can we confidently approach God?



4. In the beginning of his commentary on Hebrews, F.F. Bruce writes this about Jesus. “He is the Prophet through whom God has spoken his final word; he is the Priest who has accomplished a perfect work of cleansing for his people's sins; he is the King who sits enthroned in the place of chief honor alongside the Majesty on high.” When you think about Jesus, do you tend to think about him more as prophet, priest or king?
5. Why do you think a high priest had to be able to empathize with his community? Does it help you to know that Jesus can empathize with you in your times of struggle?
6. We only read about Melchizedek twice in the Old Testament (Genesis 14:18-20 and Psalm 110:4) and yet the preacher of Hebrews mentions him eight times. Why do you think the preacher introduces his readers to Melchizedek?
7. Hebrews 5:8 says that Jesus learned obedience from what he suffered. What does that mean? How does suffering teach us obedience?
8. Pastor Paul talked about the idea of the “priesthood of all believers.” As this priesthood of believers, we have access to God because of Jesus Christ, and we also have a priestly role of bringing justice and righteousness to our community. In what ways can, or do, you help with this priestly idea of bringing justice and righteousness to your community? Is there something you feel called to do to help with this?

