

Dear Advent worshipers,

A priest, strictly speaking is a man appointed, set aside by God to offer up prayers and sacrifices on behalf of the people of God. They were appointed and given fine garments, very specific garments. There was an elaborate ordination rite which included animal sacrifices. Why such an ordeal, what was the importance of having these priests? Because it is what God appointed for his people, it is what God has given.

God's chosen Israel were wondering in the wilderness. It hadn't been long since they were delivered from their bonds of slavery in Egypt, it hadn't been long since they had received God's words from Mt. Sinai and God's Law for their living. Being delivered from bondage, from slavery, would sure make one appreciative and willing to obey that which was given by the One who delivered from slavery. At least one would think.

The Israelite people didn't take long to demonstrate who they were, they were sinners, they constantly sought to fulfill their own needs and desires. God knew this. It is who all people are in our sinful flesh. Thus, while waiting for God's Words to come down to them through Moses they fell into idolatry. And God gives his Law, he tells what they are to be as God's people. Yet, God's Word does more than describe who God's people are to be, His Law also shows us who we are, sinners who always are rebelling against His Word.

So God does what he always does for sinners, he provides them with his mercy, he provides it through a specific means. The Lord provides a means of sacrifices and he appoints his people who are to meet him and act on behalf of the people. Amongst unholy people, he promises to make the people holy. He promises that amongst his unholy people that he will make them holy.

The sacrifices that the priests were to make were not once and for all sacrifices. They were required to be done quite regularly, daily. These appointed men acted on behalf of men in their relation to God. These sacrifices carried with it a promise, that the blood shed, the sacrifice was for atonement, for the forgiveness of sins. These priests were also sinners themselves. So they also were sacrificing for their own sins as well as for the people. These sacrifices were but a foreshadowing of the promised sacrifice that was to come.

This is what the people were waiting for, the advent of the Messiah. They awaited his coming as was foretold from the beginning. He would not exalt himself, He would not come on His own will, but He would come as one appointed and sent by the Father. He would come as God in the flesh, the great High Priest, designated by the Father. He would come to once and for all deliver His people from their bondage of sin and death.

But we sinners that we are become dull of hearing this. Our minds wonder as God's Word is proclaimed, we do not receive His Word with joy. We often times think and say, "yeah, yeah, I'm a sinner, blah blah blah, Jesus this blah blah blah." And just like the Israelites we quickly turn to our idols. We turn to our

own efforts to earn righteousness. We turn to our bank accounts and place faith and trust in what is there, or in what we hope to have there. We turn to the whims and thoughts of popular culture to dictate for us what is true, even if it is against what is delivered to us in God's Word. We may even think that we have all the answers since we were baptized and confirmed in the church, been attending for many years, maybe even had some additional instruction beyond confirmation. Even your pastors can fall into such error as trusting in themselves. But we are still sinners, we still go against God's Word and will. It is who we are.

That's why you need milk. To teach you the basic principles. That is why we never cease to be away God's good and gracious gifts as he offers them in Word and Sacrament, it is why we remain in study of His Word. We need the basics, we need the goods. We need the same deliverance that was promised to the Israelite people.

Dear hearers of the Word made flesh, as we prepare this Advent for the coming of the Christ child, we know that He is the promised One. He is sent by the Father, placed as our High Priest. In Christ's life he perfectly fulfills the Law of God, satisfying every jot and tittle, on our behalf. Hosanna to the Lord, for He fulfills God's Word!

He often prayed for His people; even as He was about to led to the slaughter, he prayed what is known as the High Priestly prayer, praying in John 17 for all people that we be kept in faith and protected from the evil one.

This Jesus is the promised Messiah. He is Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. His life, His death, and His resurrection are for you. He is himself the victim and himself the priest. He sacrificed himself, as the spotless Lamb, the Lamb without sin, without blemish on your behalf. He became your sin. He is the source of eternal salvation to all.

And he gives himself to you. He baptizes you into His death and raises you anew to new life. He gives the gifts of that which was poured out and sacrificed for you in his body and blood. He comes among you, His chosen Israel and declares that your sins are forgiven.

He is the High Priest, appointed from the Father, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. He makes you holy, and delivers to you the milk and the solid food. He not only receives God's Word and delivers it, but He is the Word made flesh and delivers himself to you. You are righteous, you are made holy, you are made perfect, your sins are forgiven through Him who prays for you, suffered and rose again for you and gives himself to you.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.