

Hebrews 4:14-16

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.

This was our second lesson on Sunday and Monday. And how full of comfort it is for the Christian! Our Lord Jesus is not indifferent to our trials. No, He has endured them Himself. Such weaknesses as we experience are not foreign to Him. No, He can sympathize with them, because He also endured them. He Himself prayed with sighs and groans. He Himself asked that suffering, if possible, might pass Him by, that the cup of God's wrath might be taken from Him if possible, yet only if it was His Father's will, and not, of course, if it meant our damnation. These two things, obedience to His Father and the accomplishment of our redemption, were the driving force behind all He did and endured, and they remained so even in His darkest hours.

On the cross Jesus asked why His God had forsaken Him. This cry of our Lord is full of meaning and consolation for us. The Father forsook His only begotten Son in order never to have to forsake us, His adopted sons and daughters through faith. His ear is now always open to us because His Son endured separation from Him upon the cross. Heaven is ours because Christ tasted hell. And so in all those moments that seem like a foretaste of hell in this life, when we could swear we even smell faint hints of the sulfur, Christ is able to know what we are undergoing and feeling, and He is therefore able to be most sympathetic and compassionate, and to welcome us one day into the Promised Land with a keen appreciation with what we have passed through to get there.

Christ is our ultimate and perfect high priest. He offered the final and complete sacrifice for sin. There was no use for the temple after His death on the cross. The Lamb of God, to whom all those other sacrificial lambs for centuries had pointed, was offered on the altar of Golgatha, His blood our life. The barrier between fallen men and His perfect Father was torn in two, symbolized in the tearing of the curtain in the temple. We now have full access to the throne of grace through the One who once filled the virgin's belly with favor. We have access to draw near in order to receive mercy and to find grace to help in time of need, such times as Christ new well. Remember that, and let that awesome and comforting truth spur you to prayer and enliven your hope when it wavers. Your God is one of us. He knows us as we know ourselves, and even better, for He is also our Creator. Your dearest, nearest Friend is the King of the universe whose kindness you seek. Take heart and rejoice. Amen.