

Hebrews 8:1-7

Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. 4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." 6 But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

A shadow is cast by a reality. A shadow, in essence, points to the presence of something greater. The sacrifices and priestly ministries of the Old Testament were shadows. They were meant to confess a reality, to point to something greater. They taught. How could someone walk into the temple, smell the burning flesh of burnt offerings of beasts, hear the bleating of sheep and goats, see the blood, and not recognize the seriousness of sin, and the dear cost of forgiveness. Imagine how striking that must have been, life taken to atone for sin, blood gathered because life, our Lord says, is in the blood.

We no longer need shadows. We have signs, Sacraments, and the clear Word of God that proclaims a reality come, a greater One sacrificed. By His death, striking as it was, as we recall in Lent, we have life—life in and through His blood, shed on the cross, gathered in the cup of thanksgiving which we bless and of which we partake. We are children, not of the old covenant, but of the new covenant of which Jesus spoke on the night He was betrayed. We need not look for another Mediator or Redeemer. We need not await a greater sacrifice—what greater sacrifice could there be than the death of God on the cross? Christ has come, and He has done everything necessary to save us—it is finished! And Christ will come again, not to do more for our redemption (the payment has been made), but to claim those ransomed by His suffering and death and His own through faith. Rejoice to be a part of that number. Live as a part of that number. When tempted, remember the temple and Calvary, the horrible ravages of sin. When nearing despair, remember the love that fixed our Lord's eyes on the cross and held Him to it. And in all things, take heart, for ***"we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven."*** Amen.