

## Devotion for April 5, 2015 – Easter Sunrise Service

Hebrews 7:24-25 (NIV84)

Theme: “**Jesus is our Living High Priest**”

Over the last few days we have been meditating on the fact that Jesus is our perfect Priest.

The LORD set up the Old Testament priesthood as a way to offer mercy, comfort and guidance for Israel. He wanted his priests to be sympathetic – dealing gently with the weaknesses of the people they served. He wanted his priests to offer the sacrifices necessary for the forgiveness of sin, and to always intercede on behalf of His people.

As we have observed, all these traits pointed to and are perfectly fulfilled in Jesus, our great High Priest.

On Maundy Thursday we saw Him carrying the burden of our sin - subject to such anguish that He, the One who shows mercy, had to cry out for mercy himself. He most certainly is a Savior who sympathizes with us in all our weakness – who listens to us with care and compassion as we cry out to him for forgiveness and help.

On Good Friday we saw Jesus offer the perfect sacrifice of himself on the cross for the forgiveness of all sin. The tearing of the temple curtain at the moment of his death, together with the events we celebrate today, all prove (beyond any shadow of a doubt) that we are forgiven. Heaven is open to all who accept God’s invitation to come to Him through repentance and faith.

Today we remember Jesus' Resurrection. His work of earning our righteousness and paying for our sins is absolutely, 100%, complete. But don’t mistake this to mean that His work is done. No, as our devotion text indicates, Jesus rose from the dead to take His place as **our Living High Priest, who never stops interceding on behalf of those who believe in him.**

Listen, then to this wonderful promise, recorded in Hebrews chapter 7, verses 24 and 25 (NIV84):

*Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

Wow! The LORD just continues to pile on reasons for us to celebrate Easter, doesn’t He? Christ’s resurrection assures us that our sins have been forgiven. It comforts us with the knowledge that death has been defeated and the certainty that, at the end of time, all who believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins will be raised to have eternal life. If these weren’t reasons enough to celebrate Easter, our sermon text has added one more: Jesus’ resurrection means that He continues His work as our great High priest – always interceding on our behalf.

And what comfort there is in knowing this! Just think about the families of the 147 Christians who were senselessly killed for their faith in Kenya this past week. They are experiencing so much pain and loss. The devil is plaguing them with such questions and sorrow that they are at wits end. What should they pray for? How should they even begin?

What comfort there is in knowing that Jesus, the Savior who suffered and died for them, hears their bitter cries and sympathizes with their sorrow. Even though they do not know what to pray for, Jesus does. He is interceding to His Father on their behalf – asking Him to give them the comfort that only the promise of His resurrection can provide. Even though they are living in constant danger from enemies of the Gospel

– Jesus promises that He will keep their souls from all harm. No matter what they experience, He will work in all things for their eternal good - delivering them safely to His heavenly Kingdom.

Jesus, our Great High priest, is not only praying for those facing trials in Kenya, but for all His persecuted people throughout the world. He lives to intercede on their behalf. He lives to listen to all their prayers and offer them comfort through His Gospel in Word and Sacrament. He gives them the hope of eternal life.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: your great High Priest's work did not stop some 2000 years ago at his crucifixion. No, He rose from the dead to continue His work for you. Jesus lives to completely save those who believe in him. He continues to live as your sympathetic High priest who sees your tears and hears your cries. He understands the helplessness you feel when a loved one is sick, or the loss you experience when a family member dies. He understands the pressure you face to compromise your faith and the loneliness you feel as society mocks it. He even comprehends the guilt and sorrow you feel over the sin you committed, which no one seems willing to forgive.

Jesus, your great High priest, lives. And because He lives, He continues to work for you. He prays to His Father on your behalf. He calls you to repentance through His Law when you sin; and when you repent, He, through the Gospel, reassures you of the forgiveness He won for you on His cross. He uses His Word to warn you about following the world, and encourages you to grow in your faith in Him by regularly meeting together with other Christians in Bible class and worship. Why? Because He promises that wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there He – our risen High Priest – will be to comfort, encourage and guide us through His Word and Sacraments.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: Rejoice. The LORD is risen. He is risen indeed. He is risen to assure you of your forgiveness. He is risen to give you victory over death. He is risen to continue His work as your great High Priest – ever interceding on your behalf to make sure that, when He comes again on the Last Day, you may take your place at His right hand in order to live with Him in the eternal paradise He is even now preparing for you. Amen.