

Second Mid-Week Advent Service

Hebrews 4: 14-16

December 09, 2015

My Fellow Redeemed In Christ,

We Are Told That When The Wise Men Came To Visit Jesus They Brought The Gifts Of Gold, Frankincense And Myrrh. These Gifts Also Tell Us Something About Jesus. Last Week We Heard About The Gift Of Gold And Jesus As King. Next Week We Will Hear About The Gift Of Myrrh In Connection With His Death...But Tonight We Hear About The Gift Of Frankincense Which Is A Particular Kind Of Incense. When It Is Burned It Produces A Strong And Pleasant Smell. The Use Of Incense Has Been Around For Thousands Of Years And Used In Many Different Cultures.....And Especially In Religious Ceremonies.. ..In The Bible Frankincense Is Associated With The High Priest Serving In The Temple, Using It With The Sacrifices And With Prayers. In Our Text For The Night The Author Of Hebrews Tells Us About Jesus, The Greatest High Priest.

I. The Author Of Hebrews Tells Us: **"We Have A Great High Priest...Jesus, The Son Of God...Who In Every Respect Has Been Tempted As We Are, Yet Without Sin. 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".**

A. These Are Such Comforting Words.....We Should Read And Remember Them Often Because In The Midst Of Problems And Worries, Pain And Suffering.. We Tend To Forget Or Even Doubt That God Understands What We Are Going Through. There Are Many Problems In This World And We Christians Are Not Immune To Them. Christians Experience Health Issues, Including Cancer...Relationship Problems, Including Divorce, And Every Worry And Anxiety Over A Child With Problems. And This Can Lead Us To Doubt God's Love And Compassion. How Can God Ever Understand What It Is Like To Live In This World With All Of Its Problems? How Could He Know What Is It Like To Sit Up At Night Because Of Pain Or Worry? How Could He Know What Is It Like To Lose A Loved One To Death Or What It Is Like To Die? And Such Doubts Can Affect Our Prayers.....Why Pray To God When He Just Doesn't Understand? What's The Point Of Praying?

B. In Such Times We Have Forgotten Christmas. We Have Forgotten That God Has Become One Of Us. We Have Forgotten That He Has Lived In Our World Of Sin And Death. We Have Forgotten That In Jesus Christ God Knows What Is It Is Like To Be Hungry And Thirsty. In Jesus Christ God Knows What It Is Like To Be Weary And Alone. In Jesus Christ God Knows What It Is Like To Be Hated....In Jesus Christ God Knows What It Is Like To Lose Loved Ones To Death. In Jesus Christ God Even Knows What It Is Like To Suffer And To Die.....As The Author Of Hebrews Says About Jesus, **"Who In Every Respect Has**

Been Tempted As We Are, Yet Without Sin." Unlike The Priests In The Temple Who Offered Sacrificed Animals...Jesus, As The Greatest High Priest, Sacrificed Himself For Our Sins As We Read Later In Hebrews, **"He Has No Need, Like Those High Priests, To Offer Sacrifices Daily, First For His Own Sins And Then For Those Of The People, Since He Did This Once For All When He Offered Up Himself ...He Has Appeared Once For All At The End Of The Ages To Put Away Sin By The Sacrifice Of Himself" (7: 27; 9: 26, Esv).** Thus The Wise Men With Their Gift Of Frankincense Worshipped Jesus As The Greatest High Priest Who Would Die For The Sins Of The World And Offer A Pleasing Aroma To God As Paul Says In His Second Letter To The Corinthians: **"For We Are The Aroma Of Christ To God Among Those Who Are Being Saved" (2: 15, Esv).**

ii. Incense Was Also Associated With Prayer As We Read In Psalm 141: 2, **"Let My Prayer Be Counted As Incense Before You"** And The Book Of Revelation Where We Are Told Of, **"...Golden Bowls Full Of Incense, Which Are The Prayers Of The Saints" (5: 8, Esv).**

A. As Our High Priest Jesus Not Only Gave Himself As A Sacrifice For Our Sins....Which Was A Pleasing Aroma Of Frankincense To God.....But He Also Offered Up The Incense Of Prayers During His Life Time As We Read In The Next Chapter After Our Text....**"In The Days Of His Flesh, Jesus Offered Up Prayers And Supplications....And He Was Heard Because Of His Reverence" (5: 7, Esv).** In His Prayer Life Jesus Was In Constant Contact With His Heavenly Father.....Looking To Him For Strength To Carry Out The Work That His Father Had Given To Him. We Are Told Especially Of Two Times That He Prayed.....Both Before His Passion And Crucifixion. In John 17 Jesus Prays To His Heavenly Father In What Has Been Called **The High Priestly Prayer"**. It Is The Longest Recorded Prayer Of Jesus With Twenty-Six Verses. Verse Twenty Expresses The Object Of Jesus Prayer: **"I Do Not Ask For These Only, But Also For Those Who Will Believe In Me Through Their Word..." (Esv).** You And I Were Included In This Prayer Long Before We Were Even Born. And The Very Night That He Would Be Arrested And Later Tried And Crucified.....As Our High Priest Who Would Give His Life As A Sacrifice For Our Sins.....He Also Prayed To His Father For The Strength He Needed....So Intense Was His Prayer In The Garden Of Gethsemane That Luke Tells Us: **"And Being In Agony, He Prayed More Earnestly, And His Sweat Was, As It Were, Great Drops Of Blood Falling Down To The Ground" (Luke 22: 44, Esv).**

B. But On The Third Day.....He Rose From The Dead, Ascended Into Heaven And Sat Down At The Right Hand Of God The Father Almighty.....So That We Can Now Pray To Our High Priest Who Gives Us Forgiveness, Life And Salvation That He Has Won For Us. And He Invites Us To Also Pray To Him In Our Time Of Need As We Read In Our Text, **"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" (4: 16, Esv).**

Even As A Child Can Come To His Loving Father And Ask For Help....So Likewise, Because Of Our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, We Have The Privilege Of Coming To Our Loving Heavenly Father And Ask For

His Help In Our Time Of Need.... And Having Lived In This World Of Sin And Death He Can Sympathize With Us As Once Again We Read, **"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...." (4: 15, Esv).**

Conclusion: In His Gospel Matthew Tells Us About The Wise Men, **"...They Saw The Young Child With Mary His Mother, And Fell Down And Worshiped Him. And When They Had Opened Their Treasures, They Presented Unto Him Gifts: Gold And Frankincense And Myrrh" (2: 11, Esv).** Last Week We Were Told That The Wise Men Brought Gold As A Gift Fit For A King. Tonight We Heard That They Brought Frankincense To Him As A Gift Fit For The Greatest High Priest....Join Us Next Week When We Will Hear About The Wise Men's Gift Of Myrrh Fit For The For His Death. Amen.