

R e a d

Hebrews 7:1–28

C o n s i d e r

This Sunday we are looking at another aspect of the greatness of Jesus. We are told by our Hebrews preacher/author that one of the things we have been given through Jesus is *a better hope, through which we approach God*.

How confident are you when approaching someone who “outranks” you in whatever scale of influence pertains to that relationship? It is perhaps that I am easily intimidated, but in my student days there were professors whose power over me caused me to break out in a cold sweat whenever we met one-on-one. In formal worship settings, the opening prayer is often referred to as the Prayer of Approach, signalling to the worshipper that he or she needs to be in the right frame of heart and mind in order to worship God.

Perhaps the most familiar of those prayers is this one from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer: “Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, so that we may truly love you and worthily praise your holy name; through our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

It appears to me that one of the primary spiritual issues with which people of faith deal is the whole matter of approaching God. Obviously this is not an issue for the atheist; in that person’s heart and mind there is no being to approach outside the physical world. But for us, to believe in the God who is completely and utterly holy is also to ask the question, “How will I come into the presence of such a God, how will I approach this Holy One?”

That is one of the issues raised in Hebrews 7 which begins with the admittedly strange incident involving the patriarch Abraham and King Melchizedek of Salem, priest of the Most High God (Genesis 14:18–20). In the mind of our Hebrews preacher the existence of this priest, who is not of Aaron’s family, raises the idea that another way, a better hope was necessary, *through which we approach God*. That greater hope is given to us through Jesus. That’s what we are going to talk and think about this coming Sunday.

It was wonderful to see some of you face-to-face the first two Sundays of March; it was great to sing again and to be able to preach in person, not simply to a camera and imagine who might be watching. I look forward to seeing more of you this coming first Sunday of April at 9:30 a.m.

The Rev. Dr. Bill Norman

P r a y

Eternal God, Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ,

I praise you with all of my sisters and brothers in the church, for the blessed hope that is ours through faith in Jesus. I praise you also that through the sacrifice of Jesus the barriers between earth and heaven have been torn down and through faith it is possible for me to approach you. Let me never allow this spiritual reality to become routine for me. Instead may the knowledge that I am part of your family inspire gratitude and commitment. May I follow my Lord Jesus wherever he leads me.

In his name I pray. Amen.

D i v i n g D e e p e r

When you were a child, who were your heroes and heroines? What made those people “larger than life”?

Read Genesis 14:18–20. Why is it significant that Melchizedek is both a king and a priest? Why does it matter that Abraham gave him a tithe of the spoils of the raid to rescue Lot?

Read Hebrews 7:26–28. What are the characteristics of Jesus that make him a greater high priest than those who served at the Jerusalem Temple?

How do you explain the better hope that is ours through Jesus? Is it a hope for now or a hope for life after death or both? Explain why you answer as you do.

How can we live closer **WITH GOD** in our lives?

How are we being **TRANSFORMED** to be more like Christ?

How is the Holy Spirit empowering us to imitate Christ in what we **D.O.** this week?