

Devotion for April 5, 2026 – Easter Sunrise Service

Hebrews 7:24-25 (EHV)

*But because this one endures forever, he has a permanent priesthood. So for this reason he is able to save forever those who come to God through him, because he always lives to plead on their behalf.*

Theme: “Jesus is our Living High Priest”

What images run through your mind when you hear the word “priest”? Do you imagine a man in ornate clothing, standing in front of an altar praying? Does he feel distant – set apart from ordinary people by his robes and rituals?

God set up the Old Testament priesthood to act as an intermediary between Him and His people. On the one hand, the fact that they needed an intermediary showed how seriously humanity’s sins have separated us from God. On the other hand, it revealed God’s great mercy. The priests served as a living picture of the perfect Saviour, who would reconcile us to God.

The LORD wanted his Old Testament priests to be gentle, recognizing their own weaknesses so they could deal gently with the weaknesses of others. He wanted his priests to offer the sacrifices He prescribed to forgive the people’s sins and always be ready to intercede on their behalf.<sup>1</sup>

We’ve observed over the past few days that Jesus demonstrated all these attributes flawlessly as our perfect High Priest.

On Maundy Thursday, we saw Jesus carry the burden of our sins. He experienced such anguish that He, the One who shows mercy, had to cry out for mercy Himself. He certainly can sympathize with us in our weakness, listening to us with care and compassion as we cry out to Him for help.

On Good Friday, we saw Jesus offer Himself on the cross as the perfect sacrifice to forgive the sins of the world. The tearing of the temple curtain at the moment of his death, together with the events we celebrate today, proves beyond any shadow of a doubt that our sins are forgiven. God’s throne is open to all who repentantly come before Him through faith in Jesus.

Today we remember Jesus’ Resurrection, which proves His duty of earning our righteousness and paying for our sins is 100% complete. This, however, does not mean that all His work is done. No, as our devotion text shows, Jesus rose from the dead to take on a new role: to serve as **our Living High Priest**, *who never stops interceding on behalf of those who believe in Him.*

Listen to God’s wonderful promise concerning Jesus, recorded in Hebrews chapter 7, verses 24 and 25:

*But because this one endures forever, he has a permanent priesthood. So for this reason he is able to save forever those who come to God through him, because he always lives to plead on their behalf.*

In addition to the reasons we celebrate Easter, such as the forgiveness of our sins, the defeat of death, and the guarantee of everlasting life, the LORD adds this: Jesus' resurrection means that He lives to plead on our behalf!

And what comfort there is in knowing this! Why? Because sin's curse surrounds us in this world, which the devil uses constantly to try to separate us from God.

For some, it is the powerful pull to continue in some sort of addictive sin, like excessive drinking, drugs, or internet pornography. Others struggle with patterns of sin in their personality - being selfish, short-tempered, anxious, or quick to gossip. No matter how willing your spirit is to avoid these sins, your flesh is so weak that you feel like giving up the struggle altogether.

Who will save you from your body of death?<sup>ii</sup> Jesus, you High Priest, will.

Not only did He pay for all your sins in full and rise from the dead to prove it, He continues to plead to His Father on your behalf, asking Him to strengthen and protect you. He sends you His Spirit through Word and Sacrament – not to condemn you but to defend you with the reassurance of His forgiving love. Satan cannot condemn you because your sins are forgiven. Live in the peace of that forgiveness – following the Spirit's lead in your fight against the flesh. And when you fall, remember the Apostle John's encouragement:

*My children, I write these things to you so that you will not sin. If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.<sup>iii</sup>*

An advocate is like a defence attorney, who speaks on your behalf – but this Advocate has already paid the penalty in full. He stands before the Father with your name on His lips, presenting His wounds as proof that your debt is cancelled.

Yes, your High Priest's work didn't stop some 2000 years ago at His crucifixion. No, He rose from the dead to continue His work for you.

Jesus lives to *save forever those who come to God through him*. He saves them – not only spiritually, but physically and emotionally as well.

Jesus sees your tears and hears you cry at the sickbed of a loved one, or when the doctor shares bad news about your health. He empathizes with the struggles you have to make ends meet, or with the emotional turmoil you feel in your heart because of a broken relationship. Jesus knows all the evil facing you day after day and pleads to His heavenly Father on your behalf.

What does He ask His Father to do for you? The same kinds of things He prayed for Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane – that, if it is His Father’s will, your cup of suffering be taken away. And, if not, that He strengthen you to bear your cross until its completion.

All the petitions Jesus invites you to pray in the LORD’s Prayer, He himself brings before His Father for you. He asks God to give you what you need for your body and life – to grant you daily bread, good health and safety. Pointing to His nail-scarred hands and spear-pierced side, Jesus implores His Father to forgive all your sins and to help you forgive others as you have been forgiven. He urges His Father to keep faith-destroying temptations away from you, and to deliver you from every evil that threatens your body, soul, and mind.

Yes, even without your asking, Jesus – your Living High Priest – is interceding for you right now. He asks God to send armies of angels to protect you, and the Holy Spirit to guide you in all truth.

And the Father listens to His Son, granting everything He asks. Why? Because Jesus offered the once-and-for-all perfect sacrifice needed to forgive all our sins. God the Father asked His Son to do this work for us – a task Jesus took upon Himself willingly. The Father wants to be reconciled to us; He wants to give us all these blessings. That is why He installed Jesus as our great High Priest – to break through the sin that separated us from Him so He could reconcile us to Himself forever.

There is another thing our Great High Priest does. Not only does He plead to God on our behalf, He also speaks to us God’s answer. As the LORD commanded the priests of old to bless His people by putting His name on them, Jesus does the same today – only far better! Jesus comes to you through His Word, rebuking you through His Law when you sin so He might comfort you with the Gospel of God’s forgiving love.

Jesus comes to you in Holy Baptism. There, through Water and the Word, He claimed you as God’s own child, washed you clean of all sin, and placed God’s name on you. Every time you remember that wonderful sacrament, you carry the assurance that you belong to Him - now and always.

Jesus also comes to you through the Sacrament of Holy Communion. In the most intimate way imaginable, He gives you the very body and blood once offered in payment for your sins, personally delivering to your lips the forgiveness He won for you. Because of His sacrifice, you are God’s child.

Just as the priests of old would put God’s name on His people – reassuring them through all the purification rites and sacrifices of their special relationship with Him, so Jesus lives to put God’s name on you in a more perfect way. He points you to His great sacrifice in Holy Communion and to your purification in Holy Baptism, so that you know you belong to the LORD.

Jesus lives to keep His promise to deliver you from every evil work and bring you safely into His heavenly kingdom.<sup>iv</sup>

Do you remember that priest you pictured at the beginning – distant, stern, robed in ceremony?  
Your living High Priest is nothing like him.

Jesus bears your name on His lips before His Father’s throne. He knows your tears. He has felt your weakness. And He rose from the dead so that His work for you would never, ever stop.

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 – always living to plead on your behalf that, as the author of Hebrews states, He may “*save forever those who come to God through him.*”

Then, when He comes again on the Last Day, you will take your place at His right hand to live with Him in the everlasting paradise He is even now preparing for you. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Cf. Hebrews 5:1-3

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. Romans 7:14 - 8:1

<sup>iii</sup> 1 John 2:1-2 EHV

<sup>iv</sup> Cf. 2 Timothy 4:18