



# DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

## March 21, 2021 - Fifth Sunday in Lent – Hebrews 5:5-10

**Focus:** *Suffering Christ*

### **word of life**

**“Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death ....”** Hebrews 5:7 (NRSV)

Read Hebrews 5:5-10

It is clear in today’s reading that the audience for this letter is one steeped in Judaism. Psalm 110 is quoted, and the imagery of the high priest is used to explain the significance of the suffering of Jesus.

Jesus is proclaimed high priest according to the “order of Melchizedek.” (vs. 6, 9) Aside from the book of Hebrews, Melchizedek is mentioned only two times in the Bible (Genesis 14:18-20 and Psalm 110:4). The name literally means “the King of righteousness.”

1. *Had you heard of Melchizedek before reading this lesson?*
2. *What do you know about him?*

Melchizedek is described as “priest of God Most High” as he blesses Abram. (Genesis 14:18) In Psalm 110, the one chosen by God is appointed a priest forever “according to the order of Melchizedek.” (Psalm 110:4) The significance of this designation for Jesus is to identify Jesus as the perfect high priest whose authority precedes the priestly lineage of Aaron and the Levites. Jesus is the high priest chosen by God Most High.

3. *What do you know about the high priest in Jesus’ day?*
4. *Can you relate to this language about the high priest?*

The high priest’s role is to act on behalf of the faith community – to offer sacrifices for his sins and the sins of his people – and to serve as a bridge between God and humanity. Through the suffering and death of Jesus, the bridge is completed; there is no longer the need for the temple and its sacrifices. Jesus has been called to be high priest of God Most High forever. He does not choose this role; rather, he is designated high priest because of his suffering.

5. *What does it mean to you to call Jesus the high priest chosen by God Most High?*
6. *Do you find this image of Jesus as a priest helpful or not?*

This designation gives meaning and purpose of Jesus’ suffering. As high priest, he knows the sins of the people. He knows human suffering, offering up “prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears.” (Hebrews 5:7 NRSV)

But unlike an earthly high priest, Jesus is fully obedient to the will of God. “He learned obedience through what he suffered.” (vs. 8) Jesus’ suffering has meaning; through it, and because of it, Jesus becomes our high priest – our bridge – to God. His suffering is redemptive and brings us eternal salvation (vs. 9).

The implications for followers of Jesus are clear: the Christ we follow knows our suffering. Jesus does not remain aloof and distant from the pain of the world; no, he willingly enters that pain and carries it to the cross. Thanks be to God!

7. *How does it make you feel to realize Jesus knows of your suffering?*
8. *When do you feel the closest to Jesus?*

## **word among us**

The mother was in anguish. Her precious two-year-old son was gravely ill. As she sat in the waiting room outside ICU in the hospital, she cried out in grief, “How I wish it was me! I’d trade places with him in a heartbeat! What can I do for my child, my loving baby? What can I do?”

In the season of Lent, we hear God’s answer to that grieving mother’s question, “What can I do?” We see the cross in the distance. We hear again the suffering of Jesus. We marvel again at the depth of God’s love – love like that of a grieving mother for her suffering child.

1. *When have you felt such grief?*
2. *What does the season of Lent mean to you?*
3. *Do you change any patterns of your life during the season of Lent? If so, what changes for you?*
4. *How do you respond to the suffering of Jesus?*

Rarely does a person intentionally choose to suffer; but God in Christ willingly does so for God’s broken, suffering children. “Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears,” the author of Hebrews says. Jesus intercedes on our behalf. He is obedient unto death – even death on a cross.

Knowing this – believing this to be true – we can face our own suffering with courage and conviction. For we follow a God who knows what we are going through and who goes through it with us and for us – Jesus Christ, high priest of the Most High God, our crucified and risen Lord.

5. *Where in your life do you hope Jesus intercedes for you?*
6. *Take a moment for silent prayer. Ask for the intercession of Jesus.*

## **faith practice in daily life**

### **Serve all people, following the example of our Lord Jesus**

We see in Jesus the example of faithful living. He is obedient to the will of God. He willingly gives of himself; he offers up his life in service to others. Jesus takes on the burdens of others; he intercedes on their behalf.

We are joined in our baptism to our suffering Christ; and we are also joined to Christ’s priestly ministry of service to others. May we follow Christ as we live our lives in faith and obedience to the will of God.

7. *What does it mean to be joined in our baptism to our suffering Christ?*
8. *What implications does that have for daily life?*
9. *What opportunities do we have to serve people in the coming week?*
10. *Name one thing you plan to do today to follow the example of Lord Jesus.*

### **Prayer**

Suffering Lord, you know our suffering. Remind us again of your presence in our times of need.  
Amen

### *last word*

Pray for those you know  
who are suffering.