

The Third Sunday of End Time – Saints Triumphant Sunday

November 15, 2015

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Hebrews 10:11-18

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. (NIV)

This last week I witnessed a little girl walk up to her teacher at recess and joyfully proclaim: *"I'm finished."* Although I don't know what she finished I know the feeling. Doesn't it feel good to know that something is finished? The long drive is over and you are relieved as you pull into your driveway. It is finished. The grass is freshly cut and neatly trimmed. It is finished. The research paper or project at work has finally been put to rest. It is finished. The dishes are done and the kids are put to bed. The last piece of the puzzle is in place, the final coat of paint is brushed, the last sales call for the week has hung up or the last bale of hay has been laid into the barn. It is finished. It is satisfying to know something is done. It is often a very good feeling and a relief when something is accomplished. It can bring us great joy to say: *"I'm finished"*

Yet, isn't it also true that with things like this we are never truly finished. The joy fades. The rest is short lived. The relief is only temporary. The grass starts to grow again. Another long drive is just around the corner. It is not finished. The next project or paper will come due. The kids will wake up and the dishes will get dirty again. It is not finished. The first sales call on Monday is waiting for you and the cows will need to eat more hay again next year! It is not finished. How can we ever really be finished when we recognize the endless list of things that have to be done?

Maybe this is why I love Saints Triumphant Sunday! This morning we are going to talk about something that has been accomplished to bring us joy – joy that has no end. We are going to listen to God's Word today proclaim that something has been completely done for us to bring us rest – rest that will last. We are going to focus on the truth that something important is truly finished so that we can enjoy relief – relief that is eternal. So, fellow saints, listen to the good news and celebrate that finally we have something that is: **Forever Finished!**

This letter is addressed to Christians suffering persecution for their faith in Jesus. Because of it some had already turned away from Jesus. Others are considering it. What many would be returning to was a life of following the

ceremonies and sacrifices of the Old Testament. Some were listening to the lies of the devil that they could save themselves through the law. Some were going back to trying to earn salvation through a method that would never be finished. So what this author does is show how Jesus is superior in every way. Jesus is an all sufficient treasure and Savior. Here is one more example as you compare the Old Testament high priests to Jesus the great high priest.

He writes: ***“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”*** Think of what the common priests of the Old Testament did day after day after day. They would offer sacrifices first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people. Every morning and every evening the priest assigned the task for the day would offer a lamb as sacrifice, and a grain offering, and a drink offering. Twice a day, day after day, the priest stood there with the same sacrifices. And do you know what? These sacrifices could never take away sins. If they could why would they have to be offered again and again and again? Talk about something that could not be done, something that could not be fully accomplished, something that would never be finished.

This is why Jesus (to whom all those sacrifices pointed) is once again superior. So our eyes are directed to Jesus, our Great High Priest. ***“But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”*** Do you hear what the writer of Hebrews is saying? Forever finished. Forever finished. Forever finished. Jesus ***“offered for all time one sacrifice for sins.”*** When Jesus laid down His perfect life on the cross all sin was paid forever. Every single sin is washed away by the blood of Jesus. There is no need to sacrifice day after day after day.

“By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” By Jesus one sacrifice on the cross He has made us perfect – forever. The original word here is the same root of the word Jesus spoke on the cross that we translate as ***“It is finished.”*** Our sins are paid in full and we are holy! Yes, while it is true that we are being made holy – that God is still working on us to grow us in faith and love and holiness – in Christ God looks at us and we are perfectly holy in His sight. We are saints. We have been made perfect forever. It is finished. God gave proof of that by raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus gave proof of it by ascending back into heaven and taking His place at the right hand of God, a position of all power and authority. Now Jesus waits to put all His enemies under His feet.

Not that we need any more proof but just in case we want it ***“the Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this.”*** Through the words of Jeremiah the Spirit says: ***““This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.”*** The new covenant is the Gospel promise that God will do it all to take our sins away. Do you hear what the

Spirit also testifies to us? Forever finished. Forever finished. Forever finished. He remembers your sins no more. You are forgiven. ***“There is no longer any sacrifice for sin.”*** When God’s only Son was nailed to the cross, when Jesus suffered from 9am to 3pm on that Friday, when the earth became dark, when Jesus’ suffering was over and He bowed down His head and died - the one sacrifice necessary for all sin was made. When the earth shook and the rocks split, and the temple curtain tore, God was saying it is enough. It is forever finished.

So what now? Don’t let us think for a second that we too won’t ever be under pressure to turn away from Jesus. The devil still lies trying to tell us that it is not finished. We too want to believe that we only get what we deserve – that we are able to contribute, at least in some small way, to our salvation. If we just live for God day after day, if we come to church week after week, if we give generously and live charitably we might think we can earn our way into God’s good graces. In fact, this is even part of a false idea of what makes someone a saint – those whose good works go way above and beyond. But just like those daily sacrifices could never take away sins, so a lifetime of good things could not remove one sin from our record. We could never do enough. This is how it is for anyone trying to earn forgiveness, attempting to win God’s favor, and seeking to work their way into heaven. It would never be finished.

So instead I pray we listen as the author of Hebrews encourages us to keep running our race with our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. We live our lives realizing that there are so many things we do again and again and they are not finished. So, fellow saints, find joy, and rest, and relief in the truth that something is finally truly finished! God remembers your sins no more. There is no more sacrifice for sins for Jesus is the only sacrifice for sins we will ever need. Forever finished. When we saints here on earth are gathered to be with all the saints in heaven to a place of eternal joy, rest and relief, then we will be able to cry once and for all: “forever finished!” Now that is going to be a great feeling! Amen.

