

*Second Sunday of End Time*  
*Last Judgment*  
November 11, 2012  
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Hebrews 9:24-28

*For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

Judgment - have you thought much about facing judgment? Maybe people do more than I think they do, but I don't believe people give a whole lot of thought about standing under judgment. Unless you have a date in court hanging over your head which will determine and decide very important things for your life, I don't know if many of us think about what it would be like to be judged. But today I want us to think about judgment. Think about what it would be like to have to go to court with your very life hanging in the balance. Imagine the emotions you would have as you stand in a courtroom— emotions you would have if you were innocent - emotions you would have if you were actually guilty. How would you feel and what would you say as you stood before the judge or jury? If we knew we were going to be judged I bet almost all our thoughts would be focused on that judgment as we would be waiting for the final verdict.

We don't have to imagine facing judgment because this is reality for us, dear friends. For: *“man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”* The fact remains that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The day will come when we will stand in God's courtroom. We do not know if that day will come tomorrow or in fifty years, but it is coming. When we die we will be judged. When Jesus returns we will be judged. We do not know the day or the hour, but Judgment is coming. Our judgment is coming. Our eternal lives will be determined once and for all time. So what emotions do we have at the thought of being judged? What will we do and what will say as we stand before our Maker and wait for His final verdict?

While the attitude of every unbeliever to the talk of any judgment by God can only be denial or terror, our attitude as children of God is formed by the Word of God. Therefore we look forward to the day on which we pass into the courtroom of God to hear the “Not guilty!” verdict which brought us to faith in the first place. I pray our attitude toward our final judgment continues to be molded by this Word of God as: **Our Great High Priest gives us confidence to face Judgment!**

In every age the church has had its particular troubles and temptations. In every age Satan works to keep God's children from reaching faith's goal of heaven. The devil's goal has always been the same, to lead believers away from pure devotion to

Christ. The same was true for the Christians to whom this letter was written. They lived in a time of transition – the transition between Old and New Testaments. While the work of Jesus brought about an immediate and definite change, the struggle was still there to hold onto the old. It was hard to let go of what they had grown up doing. Many wanted to hold on tightly to the laws and ceremonies which pointed to Christ. They had the real thing now in Jesus, but there was a big push trying to get people to go back to the mere symbols, such as prescribed sacrifices and Sabbath days. So this letter reminds them of what they would be giving up to return to the Old Covenant. This letter shows them how Christ is superior in every way.

These verses tell us one more way the New Covenant put into effect through Christ is superior to the Old Covenant. We look at the function of the high priest. Remember what a priest did for God's Old Testament people. The priest would pray for, intercede, for them. The priest would also offer sacrifices for the people. Two times every day the priests under the Old Covenant entered the tabernacle to offer sacrifices, once in the morning and once at night. But only once a year, on the Great Day of Atonement, would the high priest enter the Most Holy Place to sprinkle the blood of animals on the Ark of the Covenant. But there is no more need for this! Please understand God set all this up for good reason. The people needed an intercessor to understand how sin separated them from a holy God. These rites and the shedding of blood were significant because they symbolized the work the Messiah would do.

But the old has gone and the new has come! The Great High Priest to whom all the Old Testament priests pointed has come. Jesus has fulfilled all these things in his office as the Christ. He is our Great High Priest. ***“For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.”*** The tabernacle and later the temple were rightfully held in high regard by Old Testament worshiper, but these building were only copies of God's holy dwelling, heaven itself. Jesus appears right in God's presence. And if we start to think this is only a lesson for those still clinging on to the Old Testament ceremonies listen carefully to the words “for us.” Christ goes before God as the Great High Priest for us.

What does it mean that Christ appears for us in God's presence? Why is this so important? ***“Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.”*** Jesus appears before our Father in heaven and offers the one and only perfect and acceptable sacrifice for sins – Himself. Not all the sacrifices, not all the blood of all those animals, of the Old Covenant could take our sins away, but Jesus did! Unlike other high priests, Jesus shed His own blood. Unlike the priests who offered sacrifices day after day, Jesus appeared once for all, went to the cross and offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice for sin.

Now because our Great High Priest laid down His life for sinners, for us, no more sacrifice for sins is necessary. I want to repeat this truth again: no more sacrifices for sin are necessary. It is finished. Jesus paid for sin once for all. And our Great High Priest not only died for us, but He lives again. He rose from the dead and continues to intercede for us. You can almost hear the writer's heartfelt pleading with his Hebrew readers:

*“Don’t be lead astray by those who want to lead you back into the Old Covenant. There is too much for you to lose. No more symbols, no more pictures or types. No sacrifice for sin is needed. We have the real thing in Jesus. His blood actually takes away your sin.”*

We may not be tempted to go back to the days of the Old Testament priesthood and the sacrifices of animals, but we too have our own temptations. What are some things we might foolishly allow to take the place of Jesus, our Great High Priest? Do we put our trust in our own works and good deeds? Do we listen to the devil’s lies as He portrays God as a God who doesn’t care much about sin, a God who is tolerant and loving but without all holiness, A God who certainly would never make anyone stand under judgment? Is Jesus ever replaced by a pursuit of money, power, and possessions? Then this letter pleases to us: Christ is superior!

Jesus is irreplaceable. There is no other High Priest who meets all our needs. There is no other Savior. There is no other way we will be able to stand under God’s Judgment. ***“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.”*** What if we try to stand before God without Jesus? What will we say to the Judge as we stand in His courtroom? I am guilty. You are guilty. One sin makes us guilty and the punishment is eternal hellfire. Who could stand in His presence?

But we will not stand in Judgment on our own. For the Savior who never failed us in life will not fail us in death. The Great High Priest intercedes for His own! He will plead to His Father, point to us, and say: *“there is no sin here because it has been washed away by my blood. Father, the verdict was already in when I left the grave on the third day and you proclaimed – “Not guilty.””* Clothed by faith in Jesus righteousness the Father will look at each of us and say: *“Well done, my good and faithful servant... Come receive your inheritance...the kingdom prepared for you.”*

This is the confidence we have because of our Great High Priest who intercedes for us and gave Himself for us. This is the confidence the Word of God gives to us. This does not mean we should not think about standing under judgment. For God has set a Day. Judgment is coming. Our judgment is coming. God wants us watching. God wants us ready and waiting. We know ***“he will appear a second time.”*** But we also know Jesus will come again ***“not to bear sin*** (Jesus has already done that once for all, for us), ***but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”*** This is our hope, our faith, our confidence!! Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.