

Perfect Priest

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[0 : 00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.! Pastor Mike Scrivani preaches on Hebrews 7, verses 11-19.

Hebrews 7, verses 11-19 is our text this morning. Would you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together. Now, if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of who these things are spoken belong to another tribe from which no one has ever served at the altar.

For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest not on the basis of legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.

For it is written of him, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness, for the law made nothing perfect.

[1 : 30] But on the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God. May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? Churches are infamous for holding on to tradition and resisting change.

We make lighthearted jokes about changing the color of carpet or the color of paint in the church building. We joke about making changes like changing a light bulb in the church and how many people it takes to perform such a task.

It only takes one person to change a light bulb, but in the church, first, they often must go through a committee to review the church's policies and procedures, and then another committee to gather estimates and determine the best bulb to purchase, and then a separate committee to approve the change, and yet another to decide which account will fund the purchase, and then one more to set the date and the time, and then finally, a committee to communicate the change to the congregation and organize the potluck to celebrate the new light bulb once everyone has agreed to the change. Some jokes are humorous because they communicate a truth that's not really all that funny.

I don't remember where I first heard it or who first shared about the seven last words of the church. Those words express the danger of a congregation becoming so bound to tradition and resistant to change that they become ineffective to fulfill Jesus' purpose for it.

[3 : 27] Those seven last words are we've never done it that way before. If you spent time in the church, you've likely witnessed firsthand both resistance to change and the difficulty of implementing change.

And don't act like you're somebody who loves change. If someone came into your house and rearranged your furniture and put different things in different cupboards and painted all your walls neon green, you probably wouldn't say, that's okay, I love change.

For about 1500 years, Israel's priesthood hadn't changed. The rituals, ceremonies, and customs God gave to Moses regarding worship in the tabernacle and later the temple remained unchanged, continuing to be performed by the Levites, the priests.

The Old Testament book of Leviticus records the instruction and the laws divinely given to guide a sinful yet redeemed people in their relationship to a holy God.

It describes how the Levites, the priests, descended from Aaron were to assist God's people in worship. Leviticus prescribes the way the Levitical priests were to intercede on behalf of the people, offering sacrifices to atone for their sins.

[5 : 10] This system was in place for centuries. It was the working arrangement. God provided His people to draw near to Him, but God never intended this arrangement to be permanent.

However, 1,500 years is a long time for finite beings who are often resistant to change, especially when that change threatens the traditions passed down to them from their ancestors.

The change in the priesthood and the change it meant for God's people to draw near to Him, which the writer of Hebrews talks about in our text, was a change that I'm sure some of those first century Jewish readers must have been thinking, but this is the only way we've ever known to draw near to God.

Our parents, our grandparents, our great-grandparents, their parents, going back 50, 60 generations, have never approached God in any other way. We've never done it this way before. Some of the recipients of this letter may have been Levites. So imagine how hard it must have been for them to hear that all of these practices, all of these rituals, all of these ceremonies prescribed under the old covenant which God gave had changed with the coming of Jesus Christ whose life, death, and resurrection established a new covenant, a superior way for sinful people to draw near to the holy God.

[6 : 51] In our text this morning, the writer of Hebrews inspired by the Holy Spirit makes the argument from Scripture that Jesus Christ is the perfect high priest of a better hope and new covenant through whom we draw near to God.

And that's the main idea for this morning's sermon. Jesus Christ is the perfect high priest of a better hope and new covenant through whom we draw near to God.

The key phrase in our text this morning is we draw near to God. God's ultimate desire is for people to come to Him, for believers to continually draw near to Him as the Holy Spirit continually changes and reforms them into the image of Jesus, bringing them perfectly into His presence when their salvation reaches its culmination in glorification.

I like the way John MacArthur said this. He said, God's goal and all that He does in behalf of men is that they might come into His presence, drawing near to God is the essence of Christianity.

Drawing near to God is the Christian's highest experience and should be their highest purpose. This is the design of God for Christianity, access to His presence, coming into His presence with nothing in between.

[8 : 27] Sometimes as Christians we forget this. Some Christians think that, well, Jesus has saved me, I know God loves me, I know enough basically of what the Bible says, I know that sin is bad and that I should try to resist it, but they're not active in their effort to eliminate sin in their life and put it to death.

They are content with where they're at and the progress they've made. But in the New Testament, the Christian life is compared to athletic competition.

The Apostle Paul compared the Christian life to a race or to a boxing match, to a fight in 1 Corinthians 9. He described the Christian life as a pressing forward towards a goal in Philippians 3.14.

The writer of Hebrews uses similar language and terminology to encourage Christians to actively draw near to God in Hebrews 12.1-2. There he says, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Christian life should be a life of continued growth, maturity, and nearness to God through prayer, through studying His Word, through obeying its instruction, through fighting sin, growing in Christlikeness, and pursuing holiness, drawing nearer to God, and becoming more like Him as a result.

[10 : 28] When I used to go to Royals games when we lived in Kansas City, sometime early in the game between innings, they would do a promotion called seat upgrade. Some person sitting way up in the nosebleed section far away from the action where I was usually sitting would have their seats upgraded to the lower section of the stadium.

They were brought nearer to the field, and I don't remember anyone ever turning that offer down. No, I like it up here where I can hardly see anything.

Why would they turn that down? It's crazy. In a similar way, God says through the writer of Hebrews, the fullest expression of faith is to draw near to God, to enter into His presence and His heavenly holy of holies into fellowship with Him, which was something the Old Covenant priesthood was limited in enabling God's people to do.

And so this change is an upgrade. Under the Old Covenant, Judaism brought a person into the presence of God in a sense, but not in the fullest sense because there were barriers.

At Mount Sinai, the people were fenced off at the foot of the mountain so they could not draw nearer to God as Moses, their intercessor, went up to receive the Ten Commandments.

[11:57] In the tabernacle and later the temple, there were a series of walls, of barriers, which denied access to certain people from drawing any nearer to God's manifest presence in the temple.

In the holy place, in the holy of holies, there was a barrier again, a veil which only the high priest could enter through and only once a year to make atonement for the people's sins.

These barriers to God's presence communicated the reality of His holiness and people's sinfulness. These mediators pictured God's grace to make a way for people's sins to be atoned for.

But these barriers, this system, these mediators were never intended by God to be permanent. Sin had to be completely done away with, fully atoned for, for people to enter fully into God's presence. This is the point the writer of Hebrews inspired by the Holy Spirit is making here. Jesus is the divine Son of God. He's told us, the heir of all things, the creator of all things, and is superior to all things.

[13:13] He is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of His nature of who upholds the universe by the power of His Word. Moses went up the mountain to draw near to God, but in Jesus, God has come down from the mountain.

He's drawn near to us. Jesus is the breaker of barriers that separated our holy God from sinful people. Jesus is a superior high priest after the order of Melchizedek, a superior mediator and intercessor, drawing men near to God and God near to men because He is the God-man.

He is perfect. He is sinless. His sacrifice is permanent. His new covenant, which He established through the shedding of His blood on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, His indestructible life, means we can draw nearer to God and nearer and nearer to God until that day when our salvation is complete and we aren't just near to God, but we are in full, complete, in His full, complete, perfect, unveiled presence.

Hebrews 10, 19 through 22 talks about this truth. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain that is through His flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Drawing near to God is possible because Jesus, our superior high priest, after the order of Melchizedek, has opened the way. The design of Hebrews 7, 11 through 19 is to show this truth.

[15:04] The point is to encourage wavering Jews back then to break with their old system and come to Jesus Christ.

All their lives, they assumed that the Levitical system was sufficient and permanent, but God never said that it was so. In fact, He'd revealed in His Word in the Old Testament that a Messiah would come after the order of Melchizedek.

He would be a perfect high priest of a better hope and a new covenant through whom people would draw near to God and enter ultimately into His perfect presence.

The writer of Hebrews makes this argument here and he does so using three points. And we'll look at each of these points today and as we do, I pray that the Holy Spirit will motivate you, Christian, to be earnest, to draw nearer and nearer and nearer to God, that you will be earnest to pursue a life of holiness, that you will be spurred into action to service, to take your spiritual growth and development seriously, that you will be confident in Christ and desire to draw near to Him and be more like Him.

If you aren't a Christian, I'm glad you're here. We are glad that you are here because today you are going to hear the good news of who Jesus is and how He is the solution to all of our biggest problems.

[16:38] He's brought you here to hear this message and He's calling you to believe it and be changed by it. Jesus Christ is the perfect high priest of a better hope and new covenant through

whom we draw near to God.

And again, the writer of Hebrews makes three points in this argument, this argument for an eternal truth. First point is he states the problem, the problem which is the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood.

In verse 11, if you will look at that with me again, he says, Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood for under it the people received the law, what further need would there have been for another priest after the order of Melchizedek rather than one named after the order of Aaron.

It's important here that we understand what the writer of Hebrews means by perfection. We use that term loosely and sloppily.

We call things perfect that aren't really perfect. We use the word perfect to describe things that are really just good or better. again, using an illustration from the sports world, a pitcher is said to pitch a perfect game when no runner gets on base.

[17 : 57] That means he didn't give up any hits and he didn't give up any walks. But if you look at his stat line, you'll see that he threw some balls. There was some flaws. It wasn't so perfect.

In Hebrews, the word perfection is used to refer to the goal or aim of Christianity. Thomas Schreiner, New Testament scholar, said, in Hebrews, the concept of perfection is broad, including the forgiveness of sins, ethical righteousness, and the rule human beings were to exercise over the universe as priest kings.

If eschatological, and by that he means the end goal of God's redemptive plan, perfectly unbarred access to him living in his holy presence as sinless people. If eschatological perfection could be realized under the Levitical priesthood, there would be no need to designate the arrival of another priesthood, a Melchizedekian one.

Another priesthood would be superfluous if the Levitical priesthood could bring about the new creation and bring human beings to the heavenly city. So it is clear that the Levitical priesthood is inadequate.

It doesn't truly and finally forgive sins and provide access to God. It doesn't transform human beings so they become righteous. It doesn't restore the rule human beings lost when Adam sinned.

[19 : 15] Instead, the Levitical priesthood had an interim character in nature so that it adumbrated and prepared the way for a better priesthood, a Melchizedekian one.

The writer of Hebrews continues to build his argument. In verses 1 through 10, if you remember, he uses Scripture to remind his readers that God established a superior priesthood typified by the king-priest Melchizedek who blessed Abraham and whom Abraham gave a tithe to.

Melchizedek came before the law and the Levitical priesthood were established. Then he draws their attention and he'll do it again in our text today to Psalm 110.4 which says that the Messiah, the promised one of God, would be a king-priest after the order of Melchizedek.

This has always been God's plan to one day institute a better covenant through a superior priest.

The Levitical priesthood and the law God gave which prescribed it were not useless though.

The law and the Levitical priesthood served to enhance people's awareness of their sin and as a result of that too to enhance their awareness of God's holiness. The Apostle Paul says that in Romans 3.20 for by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

[20 : 43] The law taught God's people to know what sin is, what sin does, and to understand the necessity of atonement as seen in the repeated demand for animal sacrifices.

These sacrifices covered sin but did not remove sin. They were imperfect. The system was imperfect though it served a purpose by revealing people's sin and pointed to their need for a better permanent covering that also removed sin.

The whole system served as a type, a foreshadowing of Jesus and His atonement. Something John the Baptist understood when he saw Jesus and he said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The problem is that the Old Covenant Levitical priesthood could not permanently remove sin. God promised in His Word to send a better priest after the order of Melchizedek who would fully, completely, perfectly atone for sin.

This was God's plan before the institution of the Levitical priesthood. Again, Psalm 110.4 which the writer of Hebrews quotes again here in verse 17 is yet further proof of God's plan to replace the Old

Testament priesthood with someone better who would make a better sacrifice and who would bring God's people all the way to Him.

[22 : 20] This distancing of the Melchizedekian priesthood from the Levitical priesthood along with showing the connection between the new priest and the Messiah as being the same person was intended to warn those Jews in the church back then not to drift back, not to turn back to Judaism and not to mix Old Testament rituals, rites, and ceremonies with Christianity.

Now, this doesn't strike us with the same force as it would have the original recipients of this letter because we aren't Jews living in the first century before the destruction of the temple.

But tradition still has a strong pull on us, doesn't it? And we need to be very careful that we do not elevate our traditions, giving them the same weight or authority as what God has said in His Word. And so when we discover sacred cows in our church, we need to make hamburger. Amen? Okay. If changes in the church bring people closer to God, if they help to focus us on our God-given mission, then those changes are for our good and for God's glory.

Jesus is the solution to the problem of our sin and the barriers that exist between holy God and sinful humanity. That truth is presented in the next point of His argument as He gives the proof.

[24 : 06] He's stated the problem, now He gives proof, and that's the indestructible life of Jesus our Savior. Verse 12 again says, for where there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.

The Greek word translated as change in the ESV means to transfer. However, Christianity, in a sense, comes from Judaism, but Christianity isn't a souped up or enhanced form of Judaism. When God saves you through faith in His Son Jesus, the Bible says that you are now in Christ. The issue the Jewish recipients of this letter faced was the same issue that believers in the church in Galatia faced.

The believers in the church of Galatia were coming against these false teachers who were called Judaizers, and they were saying to them that in order to be a Christian, you first had to become a Jew.

You had to be circumcised, and you had to practice rituals and ceremonies prescribed under the Old Covenant. You have to do all of these external things, they were saying, before you can become a Christian.

[25 : 20] But Paul makes the point there that the law in the Old Testament served as a guardian or a tutor. In that day, a guardian or tutor was usually a slave who escorted their master's children to school.

In the same way, the law revealed our sin, and its purpose is to escort us like a tutor to the solution who is our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Paul writes about that in Galatians 3, 24-29. So then the law was your guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. For in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heir according to promise.

[26 : 26] Now this isn't a denial of gender or race or any other external distinctions among Christians. It's a statement that if you are in Christ, you are one with Him and others in the body of Christ.

There aren't Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians or any other the Scriptures fill-in-the-blank Christians. There are just Christians. The law shows our sin.

It shows our need to be saved from it. But it doesn't save us. In Matthew 5, 17, Jesus said, Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets.

I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Jesus says here, I've come to fulfill the law. But the law which reveals sin and God's moral perfection hasn't changed. The change in the law mentioned here in Hebrews is a change, a transference of something better in regard to the priesthood.

[27 : 37] God's moral law doesn't change. But in Christ, the way people draw near to Him has because Jesus fulfilled all the law's requirements, something no one but Him could do.

It's His sinless life that a believer receives when they are saved and clothed in His righteousness. The Levitical priesthood and all the things that were associated with it are changed in Christ. Instead of multiple sacrifices to cover sins in Christ, we have one sacrifice and He's removed all of our sins. In salvation, there is a transference.

Jesus takes our sin. We receive His righteous life. God credits that to our account. We are transferred from darkness to light, from death to life.

In verses 13 through 17, the writer of Hebrews, having made the case that Jesus is the Messiah, that as the Messiah, He is the fulfillment of God's promise to establish a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, continues to distance Jesus from the Old Covenant priesthood by distinguishing that He is not from the tribe of Levi.

[28 : 51] Look again with me at verses 13 through 15. For the one of whom these things are spoken belong to another tribe from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah and in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests.

This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek. So, it was necessary for Jesus, our superior priest, to descend in His humanity from the tribe of Judah, the tribe of David, whose throne God promised to establish forever through the promised Messiah, becoming both high priest and king in fulfillment of God's promise.

In verses 16 through 17, the writer gives the proof that Jesus' priesthood is superior. Look again at verse 16 and 17. Who has become a priest not on the basis of legal requirement concerning bodily descent because He's of the tribe of Judah, but by the power of an indestructible life.

For it is witness of Him, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Now, if you go back and you read the Old Testament, the book of Leviticus, you see there was a lot of qualifications to become a priest.

And all of those qualifications were external. First, it was your family descent. Then it was having no physical defects. Then it was undergoing an ordination service that included bathing and clothing and anointing with oil and then marking with blood.

[30 : 33] And then after that, there were more washings and anointings and you had to get your hair cut. All external things. But Jesus' priesthood has one great qualification that is superior to all.

He died and He rose again. The proof of His superior priesthood is that the grave could not hold our Savior.

And on the third day, the tomb was empty. The resurrection of Jesus Christ not only declared Jesus to be the Son of God, Romans 1, 4, but it also marked the inauguration of Jesus as our high priest. He is eternal. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. His eternity was not suspended for the 30 plus years that He added a human nature to His divine nature.

In His humanity, He experienced all the things that are common to us, everything, even death, through the exercise of His own will.

[31 : 40] Jesus talked about that in John 10, 17 through 18. For this reason, the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own accord.

I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. Jesus rose by virtue of His divine, indestructible life.

And He now lives eternally as our high priest, the establisher and mediator of a new covenant. The old Levitical priests died.

Jesus died and He rose again. Now we get to the third point of His argument, which is the purpose. To introduce a better hope through which we draw near to God.

Verses 18 through 19. For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness. For the law made nothing perfect. But on the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God.

[32 : 53] During his days as a student in France, Donald Gray Barnhouse was a pastor of a little evangelical reformed church in the French Alps. Once a week, he went to a neighboring village where he attended class.

And each time he made the trip there, he passed the local priest going on a similar errand in the opposite direction. And they became good friends. And they often chatted for a few minutes before

they went their separate ways.

On one occasion, the priest said to Barnhouse, asked him, why Protestants don't pray to the saints?

Why we don't see saints as mediators? Barnhouse said to him, why should we? And the priest used an illustration of the way a person might get an interview with the French president.

He said, one could go to the Ministry of Agriculture or to the Department of the Interior and might meet one of the members of the president's cabinet who could arrange a meeting. Basically, he's talking about networking.

[34 : 00] At that time, Raymond Poincare was president of France and he lived in the palace of Elyse in Paris, which is the equivalent of our White House. Barnhouse said to his friend, but Monsieur Lecure, suppose that I was the son of President Poincare.

I am living in the Elyse with him. I get up from the breakfast table and kiss my father goodbye as he goes down to his office.

And then I go to the Ministry of the Interior and ask the fourth secretary of the second assistant if it is possible for me to meet the Minister of the Interior. And if I succeed in reaching his office, my request is for an interview with my papa.

The absurdity of a son's having to go through a father's assistance to reach him was at once apparent. The priest was thunderstruck as Barnhouse added that he was a child of God, an heir of God, joint heir with Christ, and that he had been saved through the death of the Savior and thus had become a son with immediate access to the Father.

Kent Hughes said of this text, what a better hope is ours through the eternal priesthood of Christ. Our mild passions shames us when we think of the poets who wrote the Psalms.

[35 : 34] They knew far less than we do of the reasons for loving God. Yet they longed to live all their days in the temple, to see the beauty of the Lord. They longed with a physical thirst.

Their souls were parched like the waterless countryside. They craved the pleasures of his presence. A day with him is better than a thousand lifetimes spent elsewhere. Yet they were under what is by comparison weak and useless.

Jesus lived perfectly. He died sacrificially. He rose victoriously to bring us eternally into the presence of God.

He saved us from all of our sins. And in saving us, he set us free from slavery to sin. He lives to intercede on our behalf as priest until he returns as king to bring his sinless people into his eternal kingdom where they will live sinlessly and eternally with him in glorified resurrected bodies like his. What an upgrade. That's a pretty good upgrade, wouldn't you say? Man, in this life I have this hope. Jesus, you've saved me from all of my sins.

[36 : 58] I don't have to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. I don't have to make sacrifices once a year. I can know that in you all of my sins have been atoned for.

That in you right now I have the indwelling of your spirit. I don't have to sin. In your power within me I can resist sin. I can put sin to death.

It's no longer my master. I'm no longer slave to it. And when you come you're going to take me to your kingdom. You're going to glorify and change my body into the body like yours when you rose from the dead that no longer wants to sin at all.

To live with you in a new creation without any effects of sin. I'll take that. Wouldn't you? What an upgrade.

So why would we be tempted to revert back to anything else? Why would we pursue God through legalistic ways that are useless and don't draw us near to Him but actually cause us to drift away from Him?

[38 : 24] If you're here this morning you've heard the gospel of who Jesus is and what He's done. I think too often there's this thought amongst unbelievers that in order to be a Christian you must first do all these different things.

You must first prove that you're a good person. You must do all these things so that God will receive you, accept you, or love you. Let me tell you friend that that's not true.

None of us deserves the grace and love of God that we've received through Jesus Christ. It's not about who you are or what you must do, it's about who Jesus is and what He's done for you.

And He says come to me and I will bear your burden. Come to me and I will save you. Come to me and I will set you free from sin. Come to me that you may live. That's what He's offering to you.

What an upgrade. I'd imagine you're here this morning or you're maybe listening at this sermon and you realize that something needs to change in your life and you need more than a change, you need a transformation.

[39 : 31] And that only happens through faith in Jesus Christ who saves us, who changes us, and who brings us completely and fully into the presence of our Holy Creator.

How do we adjust according to what we've heard? As believers, I think it's this. Draw near to God with confidence in your salvation, assured that through Christ you have peace with Him.

Draw near to God with confidence in your salvation, assured that through Christ you have peace with Him. Jesus loves you.

brother, sister, He wants you to know the peace that you have with the Father through Him.

He wants you to delight in that peace. He wants you to have that peace fill your heart with joy. But to know that no matter what you go through in life, He has you, He loves you, He knows, and He is working in you, completing you, preparing you for what He has for you eternally.

[40 : 45] He loves you. I want to close with Ephesians 2, 13-21, about the peace we have in Christ.

In God's Word, we'll have the last word in this sermon. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God, in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And He came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

[42 : 06] In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You for Jesus, our High Priest.

We thank You, Lord, that we have the blessings of being new covenant people, that we know that we have full access to You in Jesus Christ, Your Son.

And that access to us that You've given in Christ will never be denied. And Lord, what peace that should give to us to know that our Creator, who is holy, loves and cares about us, sovereignly intends over our lives, and who works all things together for our good, who will bring us eternally into Your presence in bodies and a world that no longer suffers the effects of sin.

Lord, this is good news that should fill our hearts with a great joy. glory. And so God, I pray that Your Spirit would cause us to just reflect more deeply on who we are and what we have in Jesus. And that we would be spurred on by that to draw nearer and nearer to You. That, Lord, we would be eager to spend time with You in prayer, in Your Word.

[44 : 16] That we would be eager, Lord, and earnest to not waste our lives on trivial things that will pass away, but on the things that last forever.

That, Lord, our hearts would just overflow with the joy that we have in You. that our light would shine brightly in a world that is full of darkness, and that we would be confident and bold for You as we declare the good news of who You are, as we encourage one another, disciple one another, spurn one another on to love and good works, that through those things Your name would be glorified in this place and in our lives.

Lord, You've given us so much in You, and we thank You, and we pray that we would live for Your pleasure, for Your glory, which is for our good.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. To learn more, visit us in person or see the website at highlandparkbaptist.net.