

“A 24-7-365 God”

Hebrews 7: 23-28

23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death preventing them from continuing in office; 24 but because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore, He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them. 26 Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart sinners, exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered Himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever. (NIV)

In professional football the quarterback calls out a series of numbers and/or words before the ball is snapped. Sometimes these numbers or words are random. Other times they themselves are signals, letting the other players know the play that the quarterback wants to run. Just out of habit, Aaron Rodgers often says Green 19 or Blue 58 instead of hut-hut, or hike. You will often hear the quarterback on TV yell “Kill, Kill” meaning switch to the second play called in the huddle.

Christians can also designate a series of numbers that represent how god’s presence will be played out in their lives: 24-7-365. It’s not a very complex code to crack. The God revealed through Christ’s sacrifice is a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week, 365 days a year God. No timeouts, no halftime breaks. God is present for us and with us every moment of every day of our lives. In the slang of today if somebody is said to have a job that is “all day, every day,” it’s referred to as “24-7”.

God can be a 24-7-365 God because Jesus was a onetime Savior. Jesus’ sacrifice was once and for all. Through Christ’s one act of complete obedience, He became the one and only intercessory “priest” we will ever need. The sacrifice Jesus made once need not be endlessly repeated, as in the old traditional Jewish sacrificial system.

What our text for today is saying is simple but very profound. The author is letting us see beyond our own personal world of concerns so that we may catch a glimpse of the divine plan, the divine scope, of God’s work and Christ’s love. All of Hebrews’ heavenly imagery and musings on the divine are intended to stress the ongoing, never faltering faithfulness of God. The text is trying to tell us more specifically, that there is a profound difference between the Levitical high priests

of tradition and Jesus. Look at the text. Jesus doesn't need to sacrifice for His own sins before He performs the sacrifice for the people. Jesus was the one perfect sacrifice Himself and He was without spot or blemish, without sin! Therefore God is always with us because Jesus is eternal and His sacrifice; the sacrifice of God's one and only Son does NOT need to be repeated, ever! Jesus is the perfect High Priest!

I am fully aware that I preached "God's Word and Our High Priest" just a couple weeks ago. The author of Hebrews wrote about Jesus as our High Priest three chapters ago as well. If he thinks it is worthy of bringing up again, I agree. We are digging in a little deeper this time. As you may recall, I emphasized how Jesus was tempted to the full extent and experienced the worst that satan could muster. But the focus of the message was on Jesus being the Word and how important it was to be in the Word.

Here in chapter 7 the author of Hebrews talks again about Jesus' unique identity and His perfect qualifications as our heavenly high priest. He talks about Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice and how that breathed faith and hope into the world. A person can survive about 40 days without food, about three days without water, and about 8 minutes without air—but no one can live without hope. Jesus' sacrifice was once and for all. In the midst of the cancerous evil that was the Finkenwalde concentration camp, Dietrich Bonhoeffer ran his small seminary. On the altar table where the faithful worshipped every day, there was engraved a single word, hapax, meaning once. That single word, focused the hearts and minds of those caught in the middle of one of history's worst nightmares on the nature of Christ's being and the sacrifice that was made to transform our relationship to the divine. For those of us today who find themselves in prisons of their own making or imprisoned by forces beyond their control, this text, this passage of Scripture is practical.

It reveals just how much more perfect and available our path to God's presence is now that Jesus has become our "high priest". Because of the once-and-for-all nature and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, coupled with Jesus' own personal holiness and sinlessness, means that His intercessory power and saving presence are available at all times and in all places. As our high priest, Jesus is constantly "on call." Jesus is eternally accessible at a "need's notice" 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Jesus is forever "on call." He could not leave a believer alone in his personal pain and darkness. The blind beggar is healed, even though the healing intrudes

upon the flow of the journey's progression toward Jerusalem in Mark chapter 10 and verse 47. That is the story of Bartimaeus.

As our eternally available, always open conduit or channel to God's mercy, Jesus the Christ makes it possible for each and every one of us to be in an immediate, intimate relationship with no less than the Creator of the universe. A distant, unknown and unknowing God who acts as the cosmic creator and judge becomes an image of the past. Jesus' sacrifice introduces each one of us to the arms of God's mercy and takes us to the heart of God's love. When we go to the Lord in prayer He hears us, He intercedes for us, and He answers. I have to confess that I don't like it when God answers No or wait. But that hasn't happened that much lately. Look at all the answers to prayer that the Doster Church community has seen lately! That should be evidence to anyone that God hears our prayers.

The forgiveness Christ obtains for us brings us into our heavenly home as full members of the divine family, where we are protected and cherished, nurtured and taught at the knee of our divine parent. With Jesus, we may also now address the ultimate reigning power of the universe as "Abba" or "Daddy." Isn't that cool? There can be plenty of reverence and awe even when we address Him as "daddy."

Anyone who is a parent knows that parenting is a 24-7-365 undertaking. It doesn't matter if your child is six months, six years, sixteen, 36, or 60 years old—you are forever "on call," forever "available." Consider then how much more extensive is the parental care that we may receive from God—who as our divine parent is in no way limited by the junctures of time and space. As every human parent and every child knows, there are some times, some experiences, that each individual must face without the support of others. But as long as we have let Christ open the way to a personal relationship with God, there is never again any experience in life, or death, that we must face alone. NOTHING! No matter how great our fear, how intense our pain, how prolonged our wait, how profound our doubts – the promise of the gospel and the promise of Hebrews chapter 7 and verses 23 to 28 is that God is always there for you and for me. ALWAYS! 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Carl Sagan is a respected, engaging, and quirky astrophysicist/philosopher. He succeeded in popularizing serious stargazing for a whole generation of readers and wonderers. He taught, in his words, "If you wish to make an apple pie truly from scratch, you must first invent the universe." Think about it. What do we really mean when we mean from scratch? Do we mean, we didn't go to the store

and buy it already made? Did we grind the flour used to make it? Despite the cosmic scope of his views and helpful impact of his search for knowledge, Sagan was an old-fashioned “show-me” scientist. He refused to concede any points or accept any propositions unless they could be “proved” according to the established Newtonian rules of modern scientific inquiry. It was this devotion to the documentable that kept Sagan a lifetime doubter about the existence of a personal, caring God intimately concerned with individuals and their lives. Because no one could “prove” to his satisfaction that this god existed, Sagan simply could not accept the possibility as true. Yet in his personal life, Carl Sagan reveled in his over 20-year marriage to his wife Anne and delighted in the companionship of his two children. The closeness between Carl and Anne was obvious, their love evident to all. In the last year of his life, as Sagan struggled against a rare form of cancer, he admitted that it was that “love” which supported and nurtured him through the bleakest of times. Almost sheepishly, he would testify that, yes, he was depending on the presence of something intangible and unprovable – the love of one human being can share with another. Yet after he died Sagan’s widow revealed how he stayed stubbornly true to his “prove-it” principle to the very end. “We were wonderfully happy for over 20 years together,” Anne reflected, “but for Carl there was no doubt that when he said good-bye it was for all eternity.”

Isn’t that sad? I think it’s tragic. What a desolate and lonely conclusion to a love-filled, intellectually exciting life. What a forlorn feeling to be convinced that there would no longer be any love, any support, any union between hearts and souls, that no one and no thing would be present for the rest of eternity.

That “unprovable,” personal God that Sagan could not bring himself to accept refuses to abandon us – not throughout the bad times of our lives and most certainly not at the moment of our death. Our God is 24-7-365 God.

A friend sent me a simple question. Do you know God’s phone number? I looked at him like he was smoking something funny so he answered the question himself. Jeremiah 33:3. It got me curious so I called up the Good Book to check the number and to me it was like God had left me a message on His voicemail. “Call to me and I will answer you; I will tell you of the wonderful and marvelous things you know nothing about ... when they hear about the good things I do for the people of Jerusalem and about the prosperity that I bring to the city, “...and you will hear again the shouts of gladness and joy and the happy sounds of wedding feasts. You will hear people sing as they bring thank offerings to my temple; they will say, ‘Give thanks to the Lord Almighty! Because He is good and

His love is eternal.' I will make this land as prosperous as it was before. I, the Lord, have spoken" (TEV).

God is always there for you in the perfect High Priest, Jesus Christ, God's only Son. Verse 25 depicts Jesus as the perfect mediator because He combines divinity and humanity into one. As we "approach God through Him," we know that as our High priest, Jesus lives to "make intercession" constantly for us, that is, to speak out on our behalf before God." But beware!: We should not envision Jesus in some pitiful, prone position, pleading to God for mercy. The authors exalted vision enthrones Jesus as both high priest and the kind of king and Lord of Lords, at the right hand of God! Because Jesus suffered all human trials and temptations and yet remained obedient, because he experienced genuine temptation but did not yield to it, Jesus is "fitting," He is the perfect High Priest! Jesus, the perfect Son, thus becomes the fulfillment of God's promise for a new, eternal priesthood. He Himself is both perfect and the perfect intercessory agent to obtain God's forgiveness for our sins and restore us to a right relationship with God. Because God is eternal, God's love for us extends beyond the short years of our earthly life span. The divine arms that encircle us throughout our lives do not suddenly let go and abandon us at death. You and I, with Jesus in our heart, are cuddled in a cosmic clinch that will never let go. There ain't no busy signals on the hotline to God! God provided the perfect High Priest for us. According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, there were 83 different high priests between Aaron, Moses' brother and the time of the fall of the Second temple 70 years after the death of Jesus Christ. These priests were appointed by law. God appointed His Son to be the one eternal and final High Priest. There is only one Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of Man, and the Son of God. He is our ETERNAL High Priest! Count on it. Live with hope. Live with the confidence that comes from knowing that Jesus has paid the price for your sins; all of them, past, present, and future. Experience the forgiveness, Praise God for the ability to forgive others, and thank the Lord continually for what He has done for you!

Let's Pray: Lord God, thank You for providing us with an eternal High Priest, Your Son. You have Him up, a savior for all of us. Thank You that He is at Your right hand and is our intercessor. Thank You that we can have a personal relationship with You. We are sorry for not spending as much time with you as we should. We want to do better. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit, that we might be strengthened and encouraged toward obedience and diligence in our growing relationship with you. May we grow up into maturity. We pray in the wonderful, awesome name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord and Savior ... AMEN

Sermon Notes for "A 24-7-365 God" based on Hebrews 7: 23-28

Given at Doster Community Church January 29, 2023

- I. Through Jesus Christ's one act of complete obedience, He became the one and only intercessor/priest that we will ever need. Jesus became the only sacrificial system needed.
- II. A person can live about 40 days without food, about 3 days without water, and about 8 minutes without air—but no one can live without hope. Jesus' sacrifice was once for all. That gives us all hope.
- III. Jesus is forever on call. He is the eternally available, always open conduit or channel to God's mercy. What Jesus did for us makes it possible for each one of us to have an immediate, intimate relationship with no less than the Creator of the Universe.
- IV. The forgiveness Christ obtains for us brings us into our heavenly home as full members of the divine family where we are protected and cherished, nurtured and taught at the knee of our divine parent.
- V. As long as we receive the gift that God gave us in Jesus Christ, there is never again any experience in life, or death, that we must face alone. God's promise to us is that God will always be there for you and for me 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- VI. God's phone number is Jeremiah 33:3 (look it up).
- VII. Jesus lives to make intercession constantly for us, that is, to speak on our behalf before God. Jesus, the perfect Son, thus becomes the fulfillment of God's promise for a new, eternal priesthood. God's love for us is eternal! God appointed His son to be the one eternal and final High Priest.
- VIII. What are you going to do about it? Please write an "I will..." statement.