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Lent Day 8: The Priest

4-5 minutes

1 Samuel 2:27-36 (ESV)

And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh? Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?' Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,' but now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his

heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day. And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and shall say, 'Please put me in one of the priests' places, that I may eat a morsel of bread.'"

Do you want the wrongs of this world to be righted? In this text, we learn in v. 28 that the role of priests was 1) "to go up to my altar"—they should have been going before God on behalf of the people to intercede and plead for them, 2) "to burn incense"—which was a religious duty and ritual that honored God (Leviticus 16:13), and 3) "to wear the ephod"—which would mark the priests as those who counseled the people with wisdom from God. In v. 29, we see that Eli's sons, who were the priests at the time — the very ones who should have been caring for the people — were in fact "fattening" themselves on the labor of others wrongfully. Not only was this injustice, but the very people who should have been caring for others were in fact harming them. How would God right these wrongs

When we look at our own lives and the lives of those around us, we often ask the same question. How will God right the wrongs of the world? It becomes a traumatic question when we realize that we are guilty of wronging others as well. The very people we know we should love and serve are often the victims of our selfish focusing on our own interests and priorities.

We are told God does see this injustice and that he must stop it (vv. 30-31) as well as administer just consequences to the offending parties (v. 34). We need the wrongs to be stopped, but we also need someone to go before God and plead for us, as we too are offenders. Who will this be? Verse 35 says, “And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest ... my anointed forever.” The Hebrew word for “faithful” also means “enduring,” so this priesthood will last forever, but the fact that he is “my anointed forever” means my “king” in this context. Who is both a faithful and enduring priest who is also the king forever? Only one person history could be both — Jesus.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, enduring great high priest and king, you have opened a way for us to approach you even though we are often guilty in our thoughts, words and deeds. Give us your grace that restores, preserves, leads, guards and supplies our hope. In Christ's Name, Amen.

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