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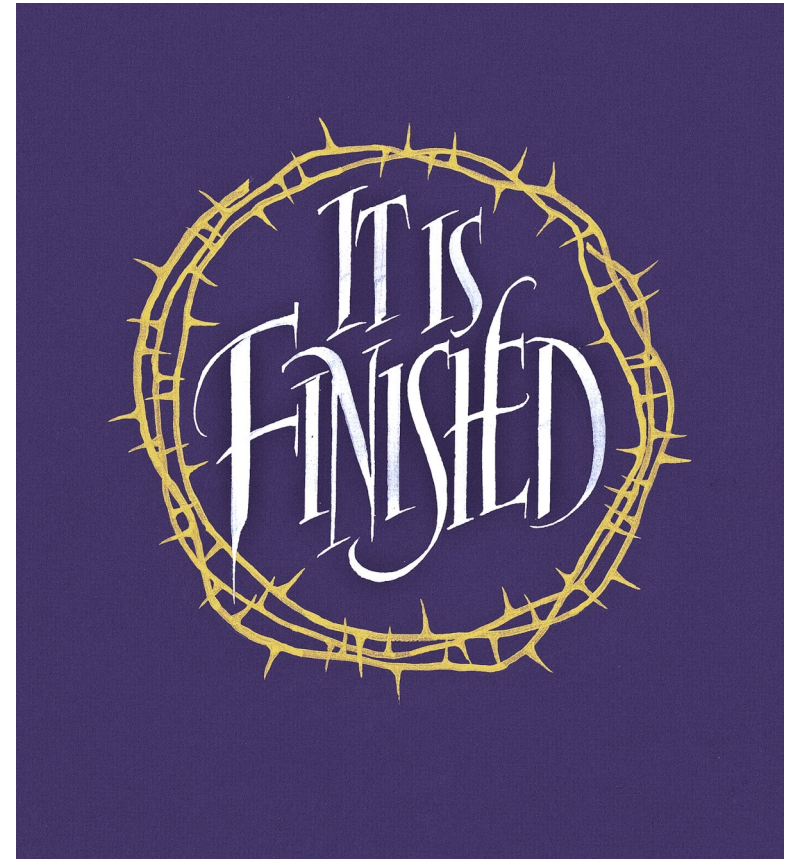
DANIEL & ALENA GUAGENTI

COVER ART

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IT IS FINISHED

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PRIESTHOOD



LENTEN DEVOTIONS ON

MALACHI
THE BURNT OFFERING

NOAH'S NEW WORLD
AHIMELECH

“THE SERVANTS OF THE KING WOULD NOT PUT OUT THEIR HAND TO STRIKE THE PRIESTS OF THE LORD.”

1 SAMUEL 22:6-23

THE HIGH PRIEST AHIMELECH

It is a difficult thing to speak a hard truth to someone who does not want to hear it. Denis Diderot, the 18th-century French philosopher, once said, “We swallow greedily any lie that flatters us, but we sip only little by little at a truth we find bitter.” The anger towards Jesus from the religious leadership of His day surely flowed from this principle. They wanted to be told they were closer to God than anyone else. Yet Jesus insisted that “the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you” (Matt. 21:31).

Even more difficult is to speak a hard truth to someone who can punish you for saying it. Ahimelech the priest found himself in such a position. He had every reason to lie to King Saul about having helped David and his men. David, in fact, had lied to him. On visiting the priest, David had said he was on a mission for the king. Surely one good lie deserves another! Especially if it meant saving not only his own life but also the lives of the dozens of men, women, and children that Saul would kill in a fit of spite. Ahimelech, though, would not be moved.

The first king of the united tribes of Israel demanded loyalty to himself, not to God, and chose his own selfish ambition over a commitment to the truth. As a result, many innocents died. But Saul’s fate was also sealed; his line would end in infamy. David’s house would rule forever through his distant grandson, Jesus, the Son of David, King of the Jews, and Savior of Israel. Jesus would not flinch from speaking truth to power—whether to Pilate, to the religious authorities, to Satan, or to our own sinful desires. His truth—that only in His death could we be saved from sin and death—would come to win the day.

By Rev. Charles St-Onge

WE PRAY

*Blessed Lord, strengthen us to speak the truth of Jesus’ death for the sins of the world, even to those who seem to have power over us.
Amen.*

“MY COVENANT WITH LEVI WAS ONE OF LIFE AND PEACE... A COVENANT OF FEAR, AND HE FEARED ME.”

MALACHI 2:1-9

THE MESSENGER

The Jews returned from exile. They rebuilt Jerusalem. They rebuilt the temple. Men who had served other nations were clothed again in the priestly garments. They were called holy and fed from the altar of God.

These restored priests did not live up to their calling. They did not demand purity of sacrifices. A menagerie of rejects and roadkill they allowed to defile the altar (Mal. 1:6-14). Their teaching muddled the Holy Word of God (2:1-9). Judah was marked by a lack of faithfulness to the family (2:13-16) and a lack of faithfulness in returning offerings to the Lord (3:6-12). Return to the fear of the Lord, the messenger cries!

We can recognize this age. We also have inherited much that is good. However, appreciation of those gifts is hollowed out. There is no will for purity, no fear of the Lord. A refiner is needed, “but who can endure the day of his coming?” (3:2). We fear that He will “come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction” (4:6).

Yet in Malachi we hear that the Lord “will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers.” By His sacrificial death and through the power of His Holy Spirit, He can bring about our repentance and restoration. So, if you don’t like the age in which we live or the path of our country, you yourself need to repent. Love the people around you. Flee falsehood and adultery.

Whatever our national fortunes, we are holy priests clothed in the robes of Christ’s righteousness (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Healing or judgment of the land will start with us (1 Pet. 4:17). During this season of Lent, we humble ourselves (1 Pet. 5:6). The Lord has come to His temple, and He will exalt us at the proper time. He will “restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (1 Pet. 5:10).

By Rev. Daniel Guagenti

WE PRAY

Lord Christ, refine us, purify us, to You be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

“FIRE SHALL BE KEPT BURNING ON THE ALTAR CONTINUALLY; IT SHALL NOT GO OUT.”

LEVITICUS 6:8-13

THE BURNT OFFERING

There are many details concerning all the sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus 1-7, e.g., the specific animal or item sacrificed, the manipulation of the blood, which parts are burned and which parts consumed. But there are two principles to keep in mind amidst the details:

1) The sacrifices are prescribed and given *by God* for the well being of the community of God’s people. The sacrifices were not invented by people to “keep God happy,” nor to express what humans imagined to be their own worthy sacrifices.

2) All the Old Testament sacrifices are fulfilled in the life and work of Jesus Christ. As Christians live in community, they see the sacrifices from before Jesus to be folded into our relationship with God and others.

The burnt offering is described in Leviticus 1 and 6:8-13. The victim was a male animal which had no flaws. The offeror brought the victim to the entrance to the tabernacle or temple. He then laid his hand on the victim while killing it. The skin was removed and the body cut into pieces. The priests then saw to the complete burning of the victim and splattered the blood at the base of the altar.

The one making the offering was thus a part of the severe treatment of the victim. The offering was not for remission of sin, but to reinforce one’s devotion to God alone. Burnt offerings included morning and evening sacrifices, as well as at times of adoration. The birth of a child, the healing of a leper, and the consecration of a priest are among those times.

The burnt offering was followed frequently by a grain (or cereal) offering, which underscored the senses of devotion and thanksgiving to God. These sacrifices are reborn among Christians in their voluntary devotions and thanks to Christ for His love to us.

By Rev. Ron Richeson

WE PRAY

Lord Jesus Christ, we offer our lives and resources as You have been offered for us. Guide us in showing our devotion in loving obedience and thanksgiving to You. Amen.

“THEN NOAH BUILT AN ALTAR TO THE LORD AND TOOK SOME OF EVERY CLEAN ANIMAL... AND OFFERED BURNT OFFERINGS.”

GENESIS 8:20-22, 9:1-17

NOAH’S NEW WORLD

It wasn’t that Noah didn’t warn them. All flesh was corrupt on the earth, and it would be flooded. Noah was a “herald of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5). He likely encouraged others to repent and join him on the voyage of the ark, but they did not listen. The world that then was, was destroyed by water.

After the flood, Noah made a sacrifice, some of every clean animal, to God. If you are concerned that this would make some varieties of animals extinct, don’t worry. Noah took with him seven pairs of every clean animal on the ark (Gen. 7:2). The aroma pleased God, and He said that He would never again curse the ground, nor strike down every living creature. The sign of the covenant that God made was the rainbow.

God said this, even though “the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” The rainbow is a gift to us, a reminder of God’s love, mercy, and grace. Our righteous God promises He will no longer flood the earth as in the days of Noah; instead, now our God brings about a flood that drowns every old Adam and old Eve who receives His sacrament of baptism. Where the covenant of the old flood was marked by the rainbow, the covenant of the new flood is marked by water and God’s Word. A flood washes through your heart, and the evil intentions are cleansed. The old Adam and old Eve are drowned in that flood, and a new Adam and a new Eve come forth, each day, until that final day when you leave this earth, and the intentions of your heart are fully and completely sanctified in Christ Jesus.

By Rev. Christopher Truelsen

WE PRAY

Lord Heavenly Father, forgive us and cleanse us of the evil intentions of our hearts. Let the rainbow of Your grace and love be evident all our days, reminding us that we are restored to You through Your Son Jesus. Keep us in the covenant of our baptism. Amen.