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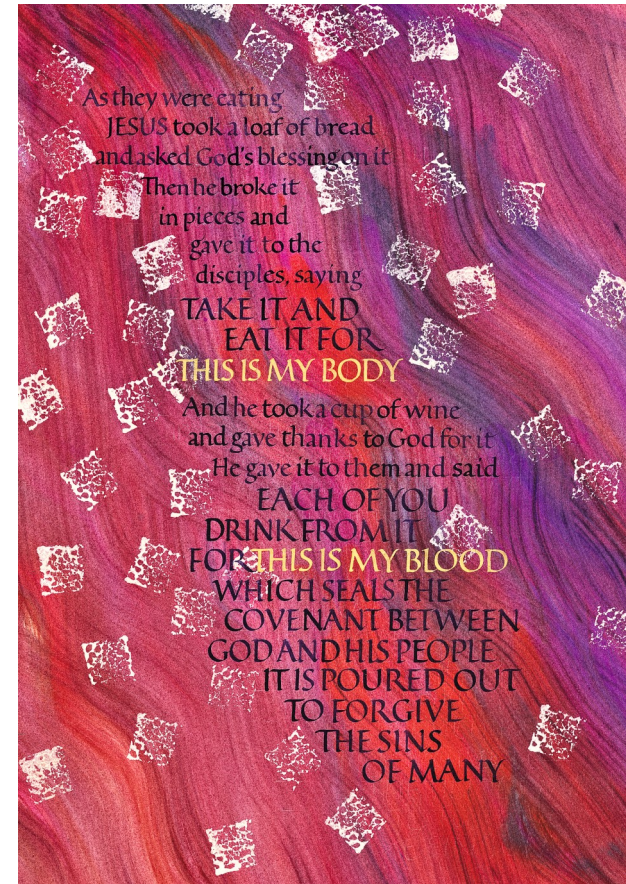
DANIEL & ALENA GUAGENTI

## COVER ART

“MATTHEW 26:26-29” © TIMOTHY R. BOTTS | EYEKONS

# IT IS FINISHED

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PRIESTHOOD



## LENTEN DEVOTIONS ON

ELI  
THE PEACE OFFERING  
HIGH PRIEST JOSHUA

MICAH'S LEVITE  
UZZIAH AND AZARIAH  
MELCHIZEDEK

“GO IN PEACE, AND THE GOD OF ISRAEL GRANT YOUR PETITION  
THAT YOU HAVE MADE TO HIM.”

1 SAMUEL 1:1-28

## THE HIGH PRIEST ELI

What can we say about Eli the high priest? Was he cursed or blessed? We turn to the story of his life for answers.

Eli had problems with his family. Frankly, his sons were worthless. They stole from the sacrifices intended for God. By their actions they demonstrated contempt for God. So God promised judgment against them. God promised to kill them and take the priesthood away from Eli's descendants (1 Sam. 2:34-36).

We might think the story of Eli is warning: keep your kids under control or else! But there is more to Eli than his terrible sons. Eli is also blessed by God. He is present to give words of comfort to Hannah as she prays for a son. Eli then raises this son of Hannah as a foster-father. His foster-son Samuel will lead Israel to a brighter future. While Eli's own sons are no good, Samuel becomes a blessing to all, including Eli.

What can we say about Eli? Is he cursed or blessed? Eli lives a life marred by sin and suffers for it. But Eli is also privileged to see God at work in his life and is blessed for it.

What we find in Eli is a man like us. Like Eli, sin has scarred our lives. Yet also like Eli, you are blessed to see God at work in you. So the same questions we ask about Eli can be asked about you: are you cursed or blessed?

We cannot answer that question by examining our lives. We have to look elsewhere. A new priest has to take Eli's place, a priest who will offer a sacrifice to cover all sins.

What can we say about Eli? What can we say about ourselves? With Eli we are not cursed but blessed, because of the Son who is our High Priest: Jesus Christ.

By Rev. Jonathan Mueller

### WE PRAY

*Holy Father, through all sin and suffering direct us to put our trust in Christ, that we may always call ourselves blessed. Amen.*

“MELCHIZEDEK KING OF SALEM BROUGHT OUT BREAD AND WINE, (HE  
WAS PRIEST OF GOD MOST HIGH)”

GENESIS 14:17-24

## MELCHIZEDEK

False religion abounds in the ancient world, and in the modern world today. Skeptics and scholars of today would have us believe that religion is a manmade thing, a desire to explain our circumstances and how we came to be, even though they say we are really the product of time and chance. We who believe in the Triune God know that Scripture is the revealed truth of the one, true God. He is not a petty tribal God, a petty God of only the sea or the trees or a local grotto. He is the God who has created everything,

“God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth . . .” This is the astonishing statement of Melchizedek, priest of God Most High. Any “god” that is not the true one is an idol, completely devoid of power. God is the creator; everything else is of the creation. Melchizedek draws us to this essential truth.

Abram worships this LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth. Scripture points us to this God. Christ is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, interceding for us with the Father, making the highest sacrifice of His body and blood, in exchange for every man, woman, and child. He is the only righteous sacrifice that can pay for our sins. Melchizedek profoundly points to the one true God.

By Rev. Christopher Truelsen

### WE PRAY

*Lord Heavenly Father, You are the one true God, creator of all, the only possessor of heaven and earth. Thank You for sending Your Son on our behalf and pointing us to Him, that we might have life and salvation. Thank You for giving us Your Spirit to stir up faith in us. We pray that You would ever keep us in the one true faith. Amen.*

“‘BEHOLD, I HAVE TAKEN YOUR INIQUITY AWAY FROM YOU, AND I WILL CLOTHE YOU WITH PURE VESTMENTS.’”

ZECHARIAH 3:1-10

## THE HIGH PRIEST JOSHUA

Priests stand before God as intercessors. After Judah returned from exile in Babylon, the prophet Zechariah saw Joshua standing as a priest, but Satan stood close by accusing. How many of us, beginning to stand before the Lord in prayer, also hear accusations of our unworthiness?

As we journey through Lent, as we contemplate our devotion and dedication to the Lord, as we measure our shortcomings, our inadequacies, our sins, we may feel small and worthless when compared to the heroes of the Bible and, even, perhaps, the ones around us. But faith isn't a competition! Joshua wasn't perfect. No one is. Scripture clearly tells us that everyone, past, present, and yet to come—all of humanity—falls short of God's glory. There is no good, better, best in our merits that offset our sins in the eyes of God.

No, faith is not a competition. First, it is a gift. God gives you faith through the working of the Holy Spirit so that you receive the salvation that has been won for you in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the sake of Jesus, you aren't just good enough; you are perfect before the Father.

When you have received the gift of faith, it becomes your journey through life. Joshua, Zechariah, and the returning exiles could rebuild as they did because they received God's grace and favor. Those gifts empowered them, and they lived in service to God in thanksgiving for those gifts.

You, too, have been clothed with the pure garments of Jesus' glory. In a single day, He removed the iniquity of the land (Zech. 3:9). This Lenten season, let us try on our new clothes in Christ, giving thanks to and glorifying the Lord for His gift of faith and the salvation that is ours in Christ Jesus.

By Rev. Rich Gizynski

### WE PRAY

*Almighty God, help us to realize that a life in You is not a competition but rather a gift. Help us to receive and use Your gift of faith each day to live in thanksgiving for Your love and mercy. Amen.*

“THEN MICAH SAID, ‘NOW I KNOW THAT THE LORD WILL PROSPER ME, BECAUSE I HAVE A LEVITE AS A PRIEST.’”

JUDGES 17:1-13

## MICAH'S PERSONAL LEVITE

Being close counts in horseshoes and hand grenades. Some other things, like being close to remembering your wife's birthday, get you no credit.

In that second way, Judges 17 describes something close to a loving family. When Micah hears his mother has called a curse on stolen money, he owns up that he is the thief. Happy to hear she gets the money back, mom asks the Lord to bless her son. You can picture them staring at that money, thinking, “But is it still cursed?”

They are close to being God-fearing Israelites. They try to spiritually launder the money by buying an idol to honor the Lord who commanded no idols be made. This was a start-up cost they hoped to earn back by selling religion.

In the same way that Micah will leverage religion for his gain, he talks “family” to the Levite. Micah had made his son a priest, but throws that unfortunate over when something closer to authentic shows up. Micah asks the Levite to be “father” to him, until the Levite was settled, and then the roles reverse (Judg. 17:11).

In this same vein of close to remembering your wife's birthday, they create something close to the tabernacle cult. They even have their own ephod! I wouldn't be surprised if they had a fancy coffee bar, or something close to it.

Israel of this era thought close might count in covenant-keeping. “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6). Turns out they were only close to being like the idol-loving nations they failed to cleanse from the Promised Land.

Here's the punch-line. Micah's name means “Who is like God?” Nothing comes close to Him. Micah was no closer with a Levite in on the scam. True redemption cannot be bought by silver or gold, but only by the precious blood of Christ. Jesus kept the covenant completely, then paid the ransom we were never close to raising.

By Rev. Daniel Guagenti

### WE PRAY

*Heavenly Father, You gave Your true Son to restore true Israel. Teach us to value Your free grace and flee false teachers. Amen.*

“THE LORD COMMANDED THIS TO BE GIVEN THEM BY THE PEOPLE  
OF ISRAEL, FROM THE DAY THAT HE ANOINTED THEM.”

LEVITICUS 7:11-38

## THE PEACE 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:

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 peace (or fellowship) offering was a voluntary offering of thanksgiving and covenant unity. The name in Hebrew suggests “making whole,” and thus emphasizes the *reunion* of God's people. The victim was an animal (either male or female) without flaw.

The one making the offering brought the victim to the entrance of the tabernacle or temple, laid his hands on it, and killed it in the presence of the priests. Some of the victim was burned on the altar, but the breast and thigh were consumed by the priests. The remainder of the flesh was returned to the people.

The peace offering accented the joy and fellowship of God with His people. A communal banquet followed the offering, showing peace and union.

The rite of Holy Communion follows and fulfills the peace offering. We bring our offering of bread and wine, and the Lord returns a portion in His body and blood. One term for communion is “the eucharist,” a term accenting thanksgiving. Then after the rite, the pastor speaks those blessed words, “Go in peace.”

By Rev. Ron Richeson

WE PRAY

*Lord Jesus, You are the perfect peace offering filling Your Church with peace and unity. Guide our celebrations of the Holy Eucharist that we may know the peace that passes worldly understanding. Amen.*

“AZARIAH THE PRIEST WENT IN AFTER [UZZIAH] WITH EIGHTY  
PRIESTS OF THE LORD WHO WERE MEN OF VALOR.”

2 CHRONICLES 26:16-21

## UZZIAH AND AZARIAH

Uzziah was a good king, and he was a strong king. Those were few and far between in the kingdom of Judah. When one is strong and successful and “good,” danger arises that you can get too big for your own britches. Uzziah got it into his head that, in addition to being a king, he ought to be a priest as well.

All the pagan idolaters around them practiced this idea of having a king-priest. It's not so strange a concept to us even today, when so many (almost religious) hopes are placed upon our political leaders, to heal our land and atone for our ills. However, Moses was clear: there would be a distinction between king and priest in Israel, for both king and priest were servants of God, not gods themselves. King-priests tended to turn worship into a worship of themselves.

Azariah, the priest, stood his ground against King Uzziah. Azariah reminded Uzziah that they each had their own duties given by God and should not transgress those boundaries. Azariah got to stay in the temple; Uzziah was struck with leprosy and never got to enter the temple again.

Christ Jesus stands His ground, against both wicked kings and wicked priests. He is the priest after Melchizedek, before and beyond Moses' Law. Jesus is the only true King who is also a Priest, and He does all for you.

By Rev. Eric Brown

WE PRAY

*Give us joy in our vocations, O Lord, and keep us safely therein. Amen.*