Another priest

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Principal John L. Mackay

[0:00] In the portion of God's Word we read together in Hebrews chapter 7 and at verse 16 you find the words, another priest who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment but after the power of an endless life. Another priest who is made after the power of an endless life.

Now scripture uses many titles to describe Jesus Christ to us so that we can have a better understanding of who he is and what he has done and what he's doing. And the significance of some of these titles is fairly obvious to us. We can appreciate at once even those who are city dwellers among us can appreciate at once something of what is meant when Jesus is called the good shepherd of the sheep. We have some idea of what is meant when Jesus is called a king. But there are other titles that are more difficult to grasp because we're no longer really familiar with the metaphor, with the comparison that's being used. The words perhaps are words that we only use in terms of religion, in terms of scripture and when we don't have anything out there to compare them with. And that I think it is very much true nowadays with the description of Jesus as a priest. We've no frame of reference out there with which we associate that term, with which we can tease out what scripture is saying to us when it uses this word. And so I think that much of what it's pointing to tends to pass us by. It doesn't come within our ordinary range of thought in the way that priests were part and parcel of the daily life of the Jews, indeed of the Gentiles in New Testament times. And the writer of this epistle recognizes that the Jewish, the people of Jewish background to whom he's writing, that they had a problem. They had difficulty with the claim that Jesus was a priest. The difficulty wasn't quite the same as ours is. Their problem was that they were so very familiar with the Aaronic priesthood and they were so certain that the Aaronic priesthood had been divinely founded, that they couldn't accept that there was or that there could ever be another sort of priest. Because Jesus wasn't descended from Aaron, they just dismissed out of hand the thought that he was a priest divinely endowed with office.

Why, not only was he not descended from Aaron, he wasn't even of the tribe of Levi. And as far as they were concerned, the priest who came from God had to be a priest who was descended, if not from Aaron, then from Aaron's tribe of Levi. And Jesus had no part of it.

So the writer is concerned, first of all, with a question that probably doesn't worry us very much at all. The question he's first of all concerned with is that though God had indeed appointed the Aaronic priesthood, both sides were agreed about that, there's no quarrel over that. Though God had appointed Aaron as priest, it was an erroneous inference to draw from that that God could never appoint another sort of priest. And the writer makes extensive use of the fact that in the Old Testament itself, there was another priestly order mentioned, that of Melchizedek. And what was more, he argues, he points to the fact Melchizedek was a priest long before Levi was ever born, let alone before the

Levitical priesthood was instituted. And there was even more than that that he could point to in the Old Testament. More than the priority of the Melchizedek priesthood, there was also the superiority of it. And he argues that was set out in the events of Old Testament history. So he was trying to break down the initial reluctance of people of a Jewish background to accept the fact that here was a priest, another priest of a different order, but nonetheless a divinely constituted order, and what was more, a divinely constituted order that was far superior to anything that had been offered to them in Old Testament times. Now there are significant differences between Melchizedek and Jesus Christ.

[5:44] But there are also vital links, and the writer uses those links to establish that Jesus was a priest. He goes on to show that Jesus is the final, the consummating priest. He is the one of whom the Lord declared, thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. What Melchizedek seemed to be, in terms of his genealogical record as recorded in scripture, Christ actually was.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

We might think of Melchizedek saying something rather like what John the Baptist said, when he testified of Christ, after me comes a man who is preferred before me, he ranks before me, for he was before me.
Melchizedek too could have said, after me there comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me. And notice how the writer is very careful to make that point back in verse 3. Melchizedek was made like unto the Son of God. It wasn't Melchizedek first, and the Son of God patterned after Melchizedek. Not at all. God in his infinite wisdom knew what his Son had undertaken to do in the covenant of eternity. And God in his wisdom ensured that Melchizedek was patterned after the Son of God, and not the other way round. So that Melchizedek was saying, as John the Baptist would say, after me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me. He is the Son of God.
So here in this passage, we have a description of the superiority of our Lord's priesthood.
[7:45] Its superiority not only over against the Aaronic priesthood instituted by God and revered by the Jewish nation, but the superiority of our Lord's priesthood even over that of Melchizedek.

Though there were more important affinities, likenesses between the two, our Lord had the reality to which Melchizedek only dimly pointed.
And so this morning, the first point I want to think through with you is the fact that Jesus Christ, as mediator, is the priest who is infinitely superior.
And that gets me back to where I started. What exactly are we saying when we say that Jesus Christ is a priest? What is the idea that was being communicated by this word, by this term?
You see, our problem is that nowadays, the only time we would tend to use the word priest, at least I hope so, is in terms of Christ. So what exactly is a priest?
[9:07] Well, we're told very clearly, a priest is someone appointed from among men to establish communication with God.

A priest is one whose task it is to ensure that those he represents are accepted by God, divinely recognized as having the right to approach God and to enjoy his favor.
That's what's important about a priest. His task is to make the connection between God and sinful mankind. The priest is a facilitator.
He is an enabler. He establishes a way of access. He establishes that way of access through sacrifice. And having established it, he controls the right of access to God through his intercession.
When we say Jesus is priest, we are saying Jesus is the one who establishes access to God for us and who enables us to come acceptably into God's presence.
[10:33] There is only one priest. Not a multitude of priests, as some claim. There is only one priest. And he has a monopoly.

He has a monopoly of access to God. There is only one unique way whereby we can acceptably approach the Most High.
And that is through Jesus Christ himself. Now that's the point that the writer is making in many of the chapters in this central part of the epistle to the Hebrews.
He was making it not over against the supposititious claims of a Roman priesthood, but over against the well-founded. But outmoded claims of the Levitical priesthood.
There were many priests in the order of Levi. They were functioning in the writer's day. But over against those priests that God had appointed, but only for a time.
[11:35] There stood the tremendous reality of Jesus Christ, who finally established communication with God and access to God.

So he is called another priest. And the word another doesn't mean another in a long line of succession. He is the 257th.
It means another of a different sort. Not in the long line of succession, but standing apart from it. He is a priest of a different sort.
He is the one whose priesthood is set up on a different foundation. He was not made. And the idea there isn't that of created or brought into existence, but rather that of appointed to office.
He was not constituted a priest. He was not appointed to the office of priesthood after the law of a carnal commandment.
[12:41] Now perhaps that word carnal rings the wrong bells in our mind, has the wrong associations. So often in scripture, what is carnal is what is sinful.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

It pertains to our unregenerate nature. But here carnal is rather just fleshly. It was a divine commandment.
There was nothing sinful in the foundation of the Levitical priesthood. But it was a priesthood that focused on outward line of descent.
How did you become a priest in ancient Israel? Did you pass an exam? Did you meet some sort of educational qualification?
Oh no. It all depended on who your father was. It all depended on what tribe you came from. There were some other regulations that looked at your physical appearance.
[13:46] It had to be without blemish. But all the qualifications were outward. They were external. They were concerned with human descent and human appearance.

Nothing was said about spiritual qualifications. But what was required was outward conformity to a given set of rituals and requirements. It was altogether a matter of physical descent, physical appearance.
And over that whole institution there could be placed the motto, dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return. And the priesthood, the other priesthood, the different way of gaining access to God that is established and focused in Jesus Christ, is on an altogether different basis, is on an altogether different foundation from that which was temporary and passed away.
And so the second thing we have to notice here is that Jesus Christ was a different sort of priest because he has an endless life.
He was constituted a priest after the power of an endless life. It's a striking phrase.
[15:13] It's one that caught my eye a number of weeks back. And yet it doesn't immediately yield its meaning. There's no doubt that Jesus is the Son of God.

And there's no doubt that as Son of God, he has the inalienable possession of the endless life of deity.
When we think of Jesus, we're thinking of one who is God and who is eternal with the eternity of the life of God.
But I don't think that in this verse we're being directed to focus on the eternal existence of God. The argument here, the whole passage here, is about the priesthood of Jesus.
And a priest is taken from among men. When you are thinking of a priest, you are thinking of one who can act as the go-between between God and man.
[16:34] And the priest is divinely selected from among men for the particular office that's given him. And so when we're thinking of Jesus as priest, we're not in the first instance thinking of what he was eternally before the incarnation.

We're focusing on what he became. Became in the condescension of his saving love. Truly God and truly man.
It is as mediator that he is priest. And he is mediator as God-man. And not simply as God.
Can I approach where I'm trying to get at another direction? What's said here is after the power of an endless life. Now the word endless here isn't connected with the words for eternity or the words for everlasting.
It's rather a word that indicates something that cannot be dissolved. Something that cannot be destroyed.
[17:55] It doesn't just point to a life which in point of fact never comes to an end. It points to a life which cannot be ended.

There is no conceivable agency. There is no conceivable influence. There is no conceivable power in heaven or on earth that is able to bring this life to a conclusion.
To break it up and say it is finished. It is over. No being. No force. No combination of forces can make any change in what God in his infinite love has become in the person of Jesus truly God and truly man.
And so his life was being distinguished from our lives and the lives of all the Levitical priests too as well. When he was writing to the Corinthians Paul pointed out that our earthly house of this tabernacle may be dissolved.
It's virtually the same word as we have here. Our earthly house may be dissolved but the life of this great high priest cannot be dissolved and so is endless.
[19:18] We are those who are subject to dissolution but death was incapable of destroying the life of the God man who is our redeemer.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

But you may say didn't Christ die? Surely if you're saying death was incapable of destroying the life of the God man who is our redeemer are you not undermining the grand truth that we remember this day that Jesus Christ died?
Oh yes he died but it is not recorded that his flesh saw corruption. Is it not rather said God raised him up having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that he should be holden of it? It was not possible that death should have the ultimate say in what happened to our Lord. Oh Christ truly died but only as regards his human nature.
He was still God. In his humanity he suffered and died and that truly but his deity his deity was imperishable and on that basis there was no break in his priesthood.
[20:45] His physical death as man was no dissolution of his eternal life as God. He is the one who declares himself I am he that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive forevermore.

He passed through the reality of death but he passed through it in this tremendous way. He remained God all the time. Christ as God man was and is able to continue functioning as priest without any break because of the unique constitution of what he is himself as mediator.
And that is one area one tremendous area where his priesthood was superior to that of the Levitical priests. Their office was terminated time and again by death.
But Christ as a Melchizedek like priest holds office forever by virtue of his imperishable life.
And that is just what we need. We want a priest who is able to arrange for us eternal access in the heavenly places.
[22:08] We don't just want access to the courts of heaven as a day trip, as a one-off experience. We want someone who can arrange it for us so that we will never have it broken because the one who has arranged it never has to leave the scene, never has to break off his intercession.

We don't want a priest who dies. To those who want to enter into a permanent relationship with God and it's only as the arranger himself is able to remain that the arrangements he makes are able to stand as permanent.
Abraham's priesthood had its day. It passed away as Abraham himself did but Christ's priesthood will never pass away.
It depends on a life which cannot be dissolved. Christ's priesthood will never be superseded. Christ being who he is is the final priest, the one who can effectively and eternally bring us into the presence of God.
God. But what is said here is not just that Christ was a priest on the basis of an endless life.
[23:45] The writer adds another word. He says that Christ was a priest after the power of an endless life.

God constituted Christ a priest on the basis of the power of an endless life.
And what does the power add to the thought that the writer is presenting to us here? Well I think it lies principally in this that both power and life point to activity.
You see it's not said that Jesus is made a priest on the basis of an endless existence. It is not merely the fact that he goes on in existence that is the thought.
It is rather endless life. And life in scripture is never something that is static. it is never something that is mere existence.
[24:55] It goes way beyond that. And when scripture talks about power especially power in relation to God it tends not to focus merely on the potential that is in God to do something.

It rather focuses on the actual dynamic exercise of that potential in power. power. So the power of an endless life is not something shall we say like a battery put on a shelf.
There's the possibility of something happening if you connect it up properly in a torch. The power of an endless life is rather like the current in an electric cable.
It is there, it is active, it is there and ready to be used all the time. And so here we have the power of an endless life.
Pointing to something that is active now, pointing to something that will remain active, there will be no blackouts with this power source. And there are I think three main points that follow from that.
[26:09] And the first is that Christ's priesthood has no limitation to its effectiveness. Because his life cannot be overwhelmed by any external force, there's never going to be anyone taking the switch and turning the generator off.

Therefore he is able to provide an unbreakable guarantee that he will accomplish all that can be asked of a priest in his office of introducing us to God.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

He is able also to save them, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.
The power of an endless life is a guarantee of the effectiveness of that priesthood for all those who come unto God by him.
No matter how extreme the condition, no matter how persistent the complaint, Christ is able to deal with it now and he's able to deal with it hereafter.
[27:29] You see, you can go to some doctors and they say, oh yes, I've got a cure for your condition, I can treat you. Once you've been there for a certain, going to them for a certain number of years, they say, oh, I'm sorry, but the more you've taken these tablets or the more you've done this, the less effective the cure is becoming and the time will soon be when there's nothing more I can do for you.

I've done my best. Christ never has to say to those who are his patients. Christ the priest never has to say to those who come unto God by him, well, I'm sorry, I've done my best.
I've given you ten years of fellowship with God, but now you'll have to try some other way. He has the power of an endless life, and that gives an unbreakable guarantee to all that he does for his people.
And the other thing, the second thing is, that Christ's priesthood, founded on the power of an endless life, is able to communicate its character to those whom he represents.
The power of an endless life imparts life to those who are his. We are being encouraged by this presentation of the constitution of Christ's priesthood to trace from his nature to what he gives to those on whose behalf he acts as priest.
[29:06] Since his resurrection, even his human nature is immutably alive, Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, and so he is able to say to those who are his, because I live, ye shall live also.

The power of Christ's endless life gives possession of endless life to those who put their trust in him. he's not just a priest who says, oh, life's possible.
He's not just in his human nature, in his nature as the mediator, as God-man, saying, I've got endless life as God-man, and I reserve it to myself.
He gives it to all those who will take it from his hand. you can't touch an electric cable without receiving a shock.
That's not the happiest of illustrations, but you can't come into contact with Christ without receiving from the power of an endless life.
[30:17] You see, God doesn't bestow eternal life here or hereafter from his own absolute unbroken eternity.

He's put it into a separate channel. The eternal life that God bestows flows through the mediator, and it's from this well of life that the great high priest bestows it upon all those who are his.
I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Spurgeon was once thinking in this sort of area, and he said that there is a twofold sense in which Christ and his people share the same nature.
In the first case, they share the same nature, because the mediator came and became man. But it's equally the case because of the oneness that now exists between the head and the body, that Christ takes his people up into that oneness of life with himself.
Spurgeon's illustration, what was drawn from the book of Daniel, and he said, the link between Christ as head and his people is not like that monstrous image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream.
[32:01] Remember, there was the head of fine gold, the belly and the thighs were of brass, the legs were of iron, and the feet part of iron and part of clay.

But in Christ's body, the church, there is no absurd combination of opposites. If the head is immortal, the body is too.
If the head is of pure gold, all the parts of the body will be of pure gold also. This is what it means to have a priest who is operating, who is constituted a priest on the power of an indestructible life.
It is a power that flows from the head through the body that is his, the body that is his church. He does not leave any part of his body, he does not leave any member of his church without enabling them to share in this great provision of a life that shall never end.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

But the third and final point is this, this priest gives life that is life to the full, not merely unending existence, it is not merely the power of an endless existence, it is the power of an endless life, a life filled with all the blessings of God.
[33:37] This priest ushers us into an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who were kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

An inheritance untouched by death, unstained by evil, unimpaired by time. An inheritance that is a combination of immortality and purity and beauty.
That's the glory of the work of this high priest. That's what the priest with the power of an endless life bestows. I remember once reading one of the legends of ancient Rome where the gods had provided, had promised a mortal that they would fulfill any wish he had if he carried out some task for them.
And he carried out the task and came to claim the promise and he asked for the gift of eternal life. And the gods cheated him.
and they said you can live as a frog forever on that pond. They said to him, so the legend went, you should have asked for eternal youth, not eternal life.
[35:10] And so they changed the terms of their agreement. That was a Roman myth. But Jesus Christ, the great high priest, doesn't cheat.

What he offers is no myth. There's no flaw in the provision made by the power of him who has an eternal life. He doesn't just prolong mere existence.
He provides life and life to the full for all those who are his. Not just an interview for a few moments with God.
Not just coming into the courts of heaven for a short time. But an introduction into the courts of heaven that is not limited in time. That is not limited in quality but is guaranteed and underwritten by the power of an endless life.
And as we come this day and remember Jesus Christ, as we come today and remember Jesus Christ in all that he is and in all that he has done, we come rejoicing that we are looking to the one who's a priest on our behalf, who has acted so that he might introduce us to God, who has acted to open up the channel of communication between heaven and earth, and whose power of an endless life absolutely guarantees that that channel once open will never be closed, that that channel once open will never be lacking in blessing, that that channel once open will look forward to the fullness of that heavenly inheritance that is untouched by death, unstained by evil, and unimpaired by time.
[37:05] Do you come this day to remember and celebrate such a saviour? He's asking to meet with you, he wants you to praise him, will you not laud him as the one who is the priest, after the power of an endless life.

Amen. We're now going to sing some words that reflect on the life of our Lord.
In Psalm 16 and at verse 8. Before me still the Lord I set, sith it is so that he doth ever stand at my right hand, I shall not move it be.
And especially we're thinking of verses 10 and 11 just now, where there is the experience of our Lord, which is also the experience in measure of those who are his.
The last four stanzas of Psalm 16 to God's praise. Amen. ■■■■■ she'd singers I Is s Divine my glory and my flesh in confidence shall rest.
[39:19] Because my soul in faith to dwell shall not be led by thee.

Thou wilt thou give thy glory one far out of shant to see.
What will thee show the path of life on thy service for store?
To thee, O thy lips, of thy light and fire to evermore.
We now come to that part of our service where we seek to remember our Lord's death around the table of remembrance. And it falls to me at this juncture to fence the table, to remind you of the nature of the invitation that exists regarding those who should come and those who should not.
[40:54] And may we read the words that are found in Galatians chapter 5 and reading from verse 13. Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty.

Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.
But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.
[42:30] Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.
Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another. Now in this connection we must distinguish between two invitations.
There is a gospel invitation that is addressed to every man and woman, boy and girl, alive in our world. It is the invitation of the Savior to come to Him, to put our trust in Him, and find that He is the one who provides for us in this life and in the life to come with that salvation that will never end.
But just as there is the gospel invitation, so our Lord ensues an invitation in the way in which He did to His disciples.
[44:04] In the last chapter of John's Gospel, where the risen Lord said to His disciples at the side of the sea, come and dine. And that is not an invitation that He issues to all and sundry, but to those who are His.

And the invitation that He gives now to gather at His table and remember Him, is an invitation that is issued to all those who have put their trust in Him, who have bowed the knee before Him, and who come as loyal citizens of His kingdom.
The terms of His kingdom are set out there in the passage that we read. The evidence that we should look for is set forth there. Which lifestyle matches ours?
Which is the way that we have chosen to go? Where do our loyalties lie? Our Lord wishes those who are His, those who are truly loyal to Him, to come and dine at His table, to meet with Him there, and He says to those who cannot meet that standard, first come and submit to me.
But even those who are the Lord's have to take care. Because we are not yet in heaven. We are not yet those who are made perfect in holiness.
[45:31] We are those who stumble. We are those who fall. We are those who can often detect in ourselves the workings of the old nature that still strives against the Spirit.

And yet we have a place at the table of our Lord. If only we will come with true repentance and seeking after new obedience.
If only we will come setting to one side all that is unworthy of His kingdom, all that is unworthy of what He has bought for us by His death, and ask Him to renew us by His Spirit, and meet with us at His table and give us strength yet once more.
So that as we come and examine ourselves, as we come and say, is this invitation to come and dine addressed to me?
We have to ask if we have submitted to Jesus. We are to ask if we are again coming as those who seek renewed cleansing and acceptance.
[46:38] It is not those who claim to be perfect that our Lord wants. His word tells us if we say we are perfect and have no sin, or we lie and speak not the truth.

But we are to come as those who would seek the purification of the shed blood of Christ. Those who would experience anew the wonder of all that He does to introduce us into the fellowship of His Father.
And so we come, looking to Him as the great High Priest, who not only breaks down the barriers Godward that we may advance towards Heaven, but breaks down the barriers within us of hard hearts and natures that still stumble and fall, cleanses and renews, and welcomes us to His table as those who rejoice in the one who gave Himself for us, in the one who continues to receive to Himself all those who are His.
It is His table. If you are His and come seeking all that He will provide, He bids you welcome. is He a direct relief of His Godward abundance and Advail immobilization.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

due to powerful dreams within all peace and LAN, a unity of both Jose■ sheep andhistophiful life, he is ■+,D ■■■aged bis Potring militia s**t, he is under which God should promise us, wife too to ■■■■ol■n to Love to be that of results of Christ■■otl

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host