

Title: The Intercessor
Date: 3/30/25
Subject: Jesus is our continual intercessor.
Scripture: Hebrews 7:25

I think I was in 2nd grade. I sat down with my lunch and bumped my carton of milk. It spilled all over my plate. The mashed potatoes, green beans and whatever was the mystery meat of the day, were covered. The kids around me started to laugh...loudly. I was crushed and felt like crying. Carol Havlik, a junior high school student, walked by and announced she often liked to put milk on her food. She took her carton of milk and deliberately poured it on her food and proceeded to eat it. No one laughed at her. She came to my defense.

Our overall proposition is: Jesus Christ is the best and is superior to all religious leaders and belief systems. He is the Prophet. He is the Great High Priest. This morning we're going to zero in on an ongoing aspect of this ministry. Jesus is the intercessor.

Read Hebrew 7:25.

An intercessor is one who pleads the case of another. The idea of intercession is often brought into the arena of praying for someone. Let's see how interceding fits into the total work of Christ.

I. Jesus is the one who saves.

The first contention of this verse, the New Testament and the entire Bible is Jesus is the one who saves. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "We have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14). Jesus is the Savior, the Rescuer, the Deliverer. The name Jesus means "the Lord saves." The Savior said he came so people might have life through him (John 10:10).

Jesus saves completely. Some translations say to the uttermost. Nothing has been left out of the salvation Jesus provides. He saves fully, entirely, both now and forever. Nothing has been forgotten. Salvation extends through the end of time and all of eternity.

Jesus is able. He doesn't need help, none at all. James Dobson, the founder of Focus on the Family, told a story about when his son Ryan was a youngster. They were getting a load of gravel or dirt for a project at their house. Ryan had somehow crawled up on the rear end of the dump truck and was hanging off the open tailgate with his feet dangling in the air. He couldn't get up any farther and he couldn't get down. As Dobson approached, he heard his son hollering, "Somebody, help the boy." Ryan needed help.

Jesus doesn't need help. Angels? Jesus doesn't need help from any or all of them. People? Jesus doesn't need help from any religious leader, founder of belief system, or average person. He doesn't need a little help from his friends. He doesn't need a little push. He accomplishes salvation all by himself.

There are people who view salvation like a stroll up to the buffet. Choose what you want and think you need. We've gone to Pizza Ranch with our kids and grandkids. With all the various pizzas, fried chicken,

mac & cheese, mashed potatoes, salads, and desserts (including dessert pizza) as well as ice cream, there was a time where our second oldest grandson, Gabey, would pick stuff like cottage cheese, olives, carrots and Jello. We had to coax him to eat some pizza and ice cream, well, maybe not too hard or coax with the ice cream.

Salvation isn't a matter of strolling up to the spiritual buffet: "I'll take some Jesus, add my good works, a few connections with my grandparents' and parents' beliefs, maybe something from Buddhism, and sprinkle over the top a little bit of eastern mysticism."

We might expect Jesus to say people can't do that. Would it surprise you that Jesus says people are free to operate that way? But he also says they're wrong to do so. They're not going to be saved.

I had a conversation with a man this past week who'd left a message on the church answering machine. He'd seen our road sign that says "Choose Jesus. Eternity is a long time to be wrong." He wanted to know what we meant by that.

I called him back and we talked about how a person can get to heaven and what he would say to God if God were to ask him why he should let him into his heaven. I shared more of the Gospel. The man said he understood and then revealed his real motivation for calling. He asked what would happen to his Jewish neighbors - was I saying they wouldn't make it heaven. I told him God is just and will do what is right and that Jesus said he is the way, the truth and the life.

We need to clarify one more thing. Some people feel God is so loving that he will save everybody, take everybody to heaven. It's a nice thought, a warm, comforting thought, but that doesn't mean it's correct. God is also just. He can't allow everyone into heaven no matter what even as a teacher can't pass everybody including the person who does absolutely no work in class, never takes a test, or turns in homework. It wouldn't be fair.

The reason Jesus is able to completely save is "because he always lives to intercede for people who come to God through him." Earlier in the service we sang several songs about the fact that Jesus is alive. He's a risen Savior. He defeated death. He rose from the grave and ascended to God the Father.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is crucial. As Paul states in his defense of the resurrection: "If the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; You are still in your sins. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (1 Corinthians 15:17, 19). We are to be pitied more than everybody, more than the person who believes chickens lay diamonds and more than the guy who thinks eating apples will enable him to fly to the moon.

Paul uses that marvelous word "but." "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (1 Cor 15:20).

Earlier in that chapter Paul pointed to convincing eyewitness proofs of Christ's resurrection – people who saw Jesus after he'd risen. If somebody doubted it happened, they could check with people who were alive about what they had witnessed. Those witnesses would share that they saw Jesus, spoke with Jesus, touched Jesus, ate food with Jesus. Jesus was definitely alive. It wasn't a hoax or an hallucination.

Paul had his own convincing evidence Jesus was alive. "I was on the road to Damascus to persecute followers of Jesus Christ. Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard Jesus

speak to me. I was physically blinded. It was removed by a disciple named Ananias. Something like scales fell from my eyes. I could see again. More importantly, my spiritual blindness was gone. I saw Jesus as Savior.”

That was wonderful for Paul. What about us? We weren't alive 2000 years ago. We didn't have the opportunity to see Jesus, whether it was a startling encounter like the one Paul had or not. What are we to do?

We rely on the testimony of those who saw Jesus and the accuracy of the Bible sharing truth. We can believe Jesus is alive. He included us in the blessing he gave after he appeared to Thomas to give unmistakable evidence he had risen from the dead and was who he said he was: “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed (John 20:29).

Jesus Christ's death resurrection and ascension point to his finished work that was accepted by the Father. Christ has started the work of salvation in those who place their trust in him and he will bring it to completion. He serves in the ongoing present role as the great High Priest interceding for his people. As mentioned earlier, intercede means to plead the cause of someone. It's to help those in trouble with the law.

If anyone of us is ever accused of treason, high crimes and misdemeanors against the USA, we'd want a defense attorney who was qualified, powerful, eloquent, intelligent, adept at navigating in and around the court system and is able to make coherent arguments. Some of you may be thinking of Matlock.

Clarence Darrow is regarded as the greatest defense attorney. “He was a trial legend, using his wit and eloquence to put on riveting performances that took juries on emotional roller coaster rides, leaving them at times floored, shocked, speechless or in tears” (bississolaw.com/top-5-greatest-u-s-criminal-defense-attorneys/).

You could try Gerry Spence who is in the trial lawyers hall of fame because he “is widely considered one of the most successful trial and criminal attorneys in America. He has never once lost a criminal case — either as a prosecutor or a defense attorney — and he hasn't lost a civil case since 1969” (triallawyerhalloffame.org/inductees/gerry-spence). Better hurry because he's semi-retired and 96 years old.

In God's courtroom, a more consequential environment, we'd want a defense attorney who is qualified, powerful, eloquent, intelligent, adept in navigating in and around the court system and is able to make coherent arguments... and one thing more. Our defender would need to be sinless, perfect.

Jesus has all the credentials. He is our advocate. A Scripture that speaks about his role after we're saved tells us “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ the Righteous One” (1 John 2:1). The original language points to a person who speaks on behalf of a person in court. Only Jesus is qualified to serve as the intercessor between people and the God of the universe who is the ultimate judge of eternal life and everlasting death punishment.

For whom does Jesus make intercession? He appears before God in our behalf (9:24). He prayed in his high priestly prayer for the original 12 disciples, for those the Father had given him, but not for them alone, but also for those who will believe in him through their message (John 17:9, 23). He intercedes for those who are his.

To whom does Jesus make intercession? Jesus is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. He's next to God the Father. You could say he has the Father's ear.

Why does he need to make intercession? Salvation's effects continue to be applied. We've been saved because of our initial trust in Christ. We are in the process of being saved, being delivered from sin. We will ultimately be completely saved as we will be in heaven with Jesus forever.

Jesus made the initial intercession for our transgressions and sins when he died on the cross (Isaiah 53:12). Jesus goes on the defense to help us not sin. He's able to help those who are being tempted because he was tempted (2:18). He helps us make it through the temptation. We focus on him so we don't give in to it.

Jesus prayed for Simon Peter: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31, 32).

What about the sin we commit? Positionally, all our sins are forgiven. In practice, there are sins that we commit after we've placed our trust in Jesus. We need to come to him to claim our forgiveness and receive it. We admit that we've done wrong against God. Jesus represents us to the Father and declares "That sin is covered. I died for that sin and took the punishment for it. There's no penalty that can be assessed to it. You can't hold him guilty. You can't judge him for that sin." He continues to make intercession.

The apostle Paul wrote in the book of Romans: "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - even more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (Romans 8:33, 34). God initially declared the verdict of not guilty (justified) for those who trust in Christ and continues to issue, as necessary, the not guilty verdict saying no charge can be brought against us.

Help in time of need. Being tempted isn't the only time when we need someone to intercede to the Father so we can receive grace and mercy (4:6).

Henry Bosch recalls a deep personal crisis: "I realized the truth of Hebrews 7 in a new and wonderful way. Satan seemed to be attacking me on every side. So I asked the Lord to plead for me. The next day the problem was solved, and I knew it was the Lord's special intervention. Never before had I been so conscious of the Savior's high-priestly ministry (Heb 8:1). If you are having great difficulty, tell Jesus about it. He will present your needs to the Father. Through His intercessory work, you'll experience the remarkable results that only His prayers can accomplish" (Our Daily Bread, April 17, 2005).

We need the help of the Lord when we pray, all the time. Have you ever felt like the more you pray about something the farther away you get from an answer or the worse the situation becomes. It seems like it's less and less worth the effort to keep on praying.

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live in us to teach us and to serve as our counselor and advocate (John 14:16). Scripture tells us "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts

knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:26, 27).

Does this mean that we can quit praying because the Holy Spirit does a much better job than we do? No. We continue to pray, even with our own groans and the Holy Spirit communicates with God the Father without needing words.

Joanie Yoder shares how God met her need. "It was dawn, and I was painfully aware of being only a few weeks into widowhood. After another restless night, I felt too weary to pray for myself. "Lord," I sighed, "I need someone to pray for me right now."

"Almost instantly God's Spirit comforted my distraught mind with the words of today's text (Hebrews 7:25), reminding me that Jesus was praying for me that very moment. With a wave of relief, I acknowledged Him as my lifelong intercessor. I will never forget how that bleak morning became gold-tinged with hope. Since then, I have drawn courage and strength countless times from my faithful High Priest.

"We too can draw courage and strength from Jesus. He is our priestly representative before God the Father. Are difficult circumstances creating fear in your heart? By all means, ask others to pray for you. But don't forget to count on the prayers of Jesus Himself. By faith, hear Him praying around the clock for you, as if He were in the next room" (Our Daily Bread, May 24, 2002).

Christ's activity as intercessor is his work for our spiritual growth. It will go on for as long as we need it, which is until we get to heaven. Even then his intercession is applied to us.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible: "He constantly presents the merits of his death as a reason why we should be saved. The precise mode, however, in which he makes intercession in heaven for his people is not revealed. The general meaning is, that he undertakes their cause, and assists them in overcoming their foes and in their endeavors to live a holy life; compare 1 John 2:1. He does in heaven whatever is necessary to obtain for us grace and strength; secures the aid which we need against our foes; and is the pledge or security for us that the law shall be honored, and the justice and truth of God maintained, though we are saved. It is reasonable to presume that this is somehow by the presentation of the merits of his great sacrifice, and that that is the ground on which all this grace is obtained. As that is infinite, we need not fear that it will ever be exhausted."

We can have the confident assurance. Job put it this way: "Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend" (Job 16:19-21).

Robert Murray McCheyne, beloved Scottish minister of the 19th century, wrote, "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet the distance makes no difference. He is praying for me!"