

KIAMA ANGLICAN  
CHURCHES**Sermon Notes: Cameron Webber, Associate Pastor****Jesus: Shadow, Not Reality****Hebrews 10:1-18**

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**Reading Psalm 40:4-10****Pre-Amble**

We've heard from Psalm 40, and some of what we've read is quoted by the writer of Hebrews in what we will read in just a minute and, unsurprisingly, the author applies it to Jesus.

If you've been with us over past weeks for our series on the book of Hebrews, that shouldn't surprise you, because we've seen, again and again, that Jesus really is the '**Name Above All names**'. He is better than everything that preceded him; better than everyone who came before him in the Old Testament. Jesus is simply the best, because he is the fulfilment of all of it (including Psalm 40:4-10 that we heard read).

Today we come to the end of a big section, (running from the start of chapter 7 through to the middle of chapter 10), that shows Jesus is the mediator of a new and better covenant. Ideas of priests and sacrifices and sanctuaries have been bouncing around, all of which, as we heard last week in chapter 9, are illustrations (9:9) (which showed up their own inadequacies) and external regulations applying, until the time of the new order (9:10). And as we are about to read, the law, the old covenant, the old testament - is the **Shadow** and **Jesus** is the **Reality**.

**Reading Hebrews 10:1-18****Prayer****Introduction**

Open the newspapers, turn on the television, look at the newsfeed on your favourite device, or just look around and you'll see there are some big problems facing the world - problems facing us as individuals or collectively, problems with a big impact on just a few or with a global impact. There is the problem of inflation along with the cost of living crisis; the problem of rising interest rates and their disproportionate impact on young homebuyers.; the problem of aging bodies, of declining health, of the death of loved ones; the problem of changing climate patterns (whatever their cause) and the flow on impact of fires and floods with the loss of property and lives as we have seen in recent weeks. There is the problem of population growth and finite resources; the problem of famine, displacement, and disease; the problem of division in nations and war between nations, let alone the worry of whether or not your team will win the grand-final. (After last night that's no longer a worry for me.)

**1. The Problem of Our Sin**

But without downplaying the effect that those problems have on us, there is a bigger problem we all face, a problem that is ultimately the root cause of all problems, and though some people are oblivious to it, the problem we all face is, as we see repeatedly in the Bible, the biggest problem we all face is the problem of our sin. As Isaiah says, Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you. (Isaiah 59:2)

Ever since Adam and Eve first disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, that perfect place where God walked with them, that place of God's presence; ever since they were sent out and away from God, humanity's greatest need is that we might be brought back to God.

Our sin, our disobedience, our failure to acknowledge God as God, our ignoring of him, our displacing him from his rightful position, our falling short of his glory breaks the relationship we were made to have with the God who made us.

As the old hymn has it, we are *Adam's helpless race*.

## **2. The Need for Sacrifice**

This is our human plight - separation, death - and in the Old Covenant System, that God established with his people Israel, this separation was overcome by sacrifices - by the death of animals - in their place.

We could (and probably should) spend a lot of time delving into Leviticus and other parts of the Old Testament to better understand the role and purpose and the nature of the sacrifices in the old covenant, but let me simply note that in 9:22, referring to the old covenant, we read that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

The punishment for sin is death (the shedding of blood) and if sin is to be forgiven, it can't simply be ignored, the cost must be born, the price must be paid, something must die. And we see in the OT, the idea of a substitute being the 'something' that dies. We see it even before the Old Covenant is established and the law of Moses is given.

As the people come out of Egypt, on the night of the Exodus it was the homes where the blood of a sacrificed lamb had been placed on the door frame that the angel of death 'passed over', a lamb having died in the place of, as a substitute for, the firstborn in the home.

Then at Mount Sinai, the whole substitutionary sacrificial system of the Old Covenant is instituted, and so the high priest offers sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people (5:3). And on the day of atonement (last week's reading) only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. (9:7)

The punishment for sin, for rebellion against God is death. God has told Adam, 'You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.' (Genesis 2:17). Spiritual death and separation from God immediately followed their disobedience and physical death came too.

We are easily tempted to downplay our sin and the holiness of God, but God who is perfect in holiness can't ignore sin and pretend it hasn't happened. So in the old covenant sin is punished, punished in the substitute, in the death of an animal, sacrificed in the place of sinful people.

### **2a. The Shadow of Animal Sacrifice**

And well might we say that the substitute thing doesn't really doesn't cut the mustard. If someone is sentenced to life in prison for a horrible crime we don't let them swap out for a sheep and get that locked up instead.

Although the animal sacrifices make a point about the seriousness of sin and are a reminder (10:3) of our sinfulness, they really are inadequate, and as we read – only a shadow (10:1). Why? It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (10:4) and so, day after day, every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (10:11)

There is that built-in obsolescence of the Old Covenant that we spoke of the other week, because, the law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. (10:1) It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (10:4)

And in Psalm 40 (quoted in Hebrews 10), it is said to God, 'Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them' - though they were offered in accordance with the law.

The law, the old covenant, was ordained by God, but yet the law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming not the realities themselves. (10:1) And really the whole of the Old Covenant and all that is recorded for us in the Old Testament keeps showing us our need for a bigger solution to the problem of our sin.

In the sweep of the book of Hebrews we need a better... a better everything: someone better than the angels, better than the prophets, Adam, Moses, Aaron and Joshua. We need a better priest and a better sacrifice. In the sweep of the Old Testament we need a better Saviour than Samson, a better King than David, a better temple than Solomon's, and so on. We need Jesus: the 'Yes and Amen' to every promise of God (2 Corinthians 1:20); Jesus: the fulfilment of everything written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms (Luke 24:44); Jesus: the fulfilment of every and shadow, the one who is the Reality.

## **2b. The Reality of Jesus' Sacrifice**

Under the Old Covenant (as we read last week), The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean, sanctify them, so that they are outwardly clean. (9:13) But it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to [really] take away sins. (10:4)

So with the New Covenant, How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, ... cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (9:14) Then inadequacy of animal sacrifices gives way to the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Jesus.

Go back and re-read chapter 9, watch last week's sermon, and see the contrasts as the shadow gives way to reality, that are again emphasised from a different angle here in chapter 10, quoting Psalm 40 ... Jesus came to do his Father's will (10:7), was obedient to death even death on a cross offering his body as a sacrifice once for all. (10:10)

Under the Old Covenant, day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins (10:11): standing, repeating, because it was only a shadow. But under the New Covenant, this priest (Jesus) offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, then he sat down at the right hand of God. (10:12): ...once for all, seated, done, because it is the reality. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect for ever, those who are being made holy. (10:14)

And in 10:16-17 we see it is all tied up with the new covenant - promised by God through Jeremiah – and the author repeats part of that quote we saw in chapter 8 a couple of weeks back – the New Covenant with its true and deeper forgiveness and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit now freely available because sin has been dealt with in Jesus' all sufficient sacrifice, once and for all. And so as our reading concluded, where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary. (10:18) There is no need for further on-going Old Covenant sacrifices. So as we place our faith in that once for all sacrifice, as we rely on Jesus' perfect life, and his death on our place, our sin is forgiven, our relationship God is restored, our eternity is secure, because in Him – we have been made perfect (v14) and in Him – we are increasingly being made holy (v14) as we wait for the day of Jesus' return.

As the last verse of chapter 9 says Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. (9:28). And well might we sing ... *(One of these songs referred to at each of the services.)*

#### Rejoice the Lord is King

Jesus the Saviour reigns,  
the God of truth and love.  
When He had purged our stains  
He took His seat above. ...

Rejoice in glorious hope,  
Jesus the Judge shall come  
and take His servants up  
to their eternal home.

#### Yet Not I

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven,  
the future sure, the price it has been paid,  
for Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon  
and He was raised to overthrow the grave.  
To this I hold - My sin has been defeated,  
Jesus now and ever is my plea.  
Oh the chains are released, I can sing I am free;  
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

#### My Hope is Built

My hope is built on nothing less  
than Jesus' blood and righteousness. ...  
When He shall come with trumpet sound  
O may I then in Him be found  
Dressed in His righteousness alone  
Faultless to stand before the throne

#### Living Hope

The cross has spoken, I am forgiven,  
the King of kings calls me His own.  
Beautiful Saviour I'm Yours forever,  
Jesus Christ my living hope.

Hallelujah! Praise the One who set me free.  
Hallelujah! Death has lost its grip on me.  
You have broken every chain,  
there's salvation in Your name,  
Jesus Christ my living hope.

### **3. The Assurance that Faith Brings**

And we can sing those songs, because as we place our faith in Jesus we have the full assurance that faith brings (10:22) and that's not just an assurance of heaven when we die, but the assurance that right now we have an unhindered relationship with the living God. And drawing on the picture of the shadow of the Old Covenant we read in the verses immediately following our reading (10:19-22a) Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings.

Draw near to God through Jesus, draw near to God in prayer, in reading his word, draw near with confidence and assurance because of Jesus and faith in his sacrifice once for all. Anywhere, anytime – draw near to God.

And when you feel unworthy, remember again the sacrifice of Jesus and let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (10:22) Imagery from the Old Covenant applied to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus so that even when our faith feels weak, as the next verse says, Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. (10:23).

It's not dependant on us, but on Jesus, the perfect priest, the perfect sacrifice, the one who is not a shadow but the reality, the fulfilment of all the Old Testament, and he is simply the best.

Let's pray.

### **Prayer**