

“Blood and Righteousness” – Pr Sprengle – Pentecost 25, November 13, 2021

- I. **Hebrews 10:11-25** – previously read
- II. **Last week, for All Saints’ Day, we talked about a covering.**
 - a. The saints of God... both you and me, along with those in glory... are now wearing, or covered with the righteousness of God.
 - i. In the reading from Revelation 7, it said that John saw people in heaven wearing white robes bleached in the blood of Jesus.
 - b. Throughout all human history, our covering – or our clothing – tells something about the type of person we are...
 - i. Way back in Jesus’ day, Roman soldiers were easy to spot – and probably the Pharisees and religious leaders – all by what they wore
 - ii. Expensive clothes and a crown probably mean royalty
 - iii. A police uniform, a white lab coat with a stethoscope draped on the neck, a brown uniform with shorts, or even a clerical collar tells us a little about the person.
 - c. However, the clothes that people wear – or the uniform – doesn’t necessarily tell us who’s really underneath.
 - i. We are taught to respect certain people like police officers, pastors, elected officials, doctors, teachers, and soldiers
 - ii. But over time, fewer people respect these offices and vocations because of the abuses we’ve seen from them.
 - iii. We often reserve things like trust and respect until we get to know the person or learn more about their character.
 - d. I guess you could say that we don’t qualify people by their clothes or covering, but by who they are as a person.
- III. **Who are you?**
 - a. Is it easy or difficult for people to get to know you?
 - i. Are you a private person... or an open book?
 - ii. Do people accuse you of always giving TMI? (too much information?)
 - b. When I ask the question, who are you, what’s the first thing that comes to mind?
 - i. If a stranger asks you that question, you would answer with a name... so that makes sense.
 - ii. But if I already know you, then I’m asking something deeper –
 1. Like what makes you the person you are
 2. Tell me about your history and experiences
 3. What brings you joy and sorrow?
 - c. For most of us, these answers are known by only a few... and the deepest truths about ourselves may only be known by God and us.
 - d. The Bible has an answer about who you are... and it usually doesn’t go over well... because it basically says we are all dirty, rotten, stinking sinners with no good in us.

- i. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23
- ii. “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins” Ephesians 2:1
- iii. “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” Psalm 51:5
- iv. “Death spread to all men because all sinned” Romans 5:12
- v. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” 1 John 1:8
- vi. Yes, the Bible doesn’t mince words about our sinful nature – and that we cannot come to God or even be near Him because of our profound brokenness.

IV. **Our Hebrews reading today is packed with meaning.**

- a. For example, to understand it fully, you need to know about the temple, the sacrificial system, the priests, and the Day of Atonement.
- b. The temple was in a tent or tabernacle for many years as the Hebrews wandered in the desert – but King Solomon finally built a solid structure.
 - i. In Jesus’ day, Herod the Great built a new temple where we have many stories from the Gospels
- c. The temple had an outside area where sacrifices were burned, and then the first covered room was the Holy Place – where the lampstand, the bread of presence and the altar of incense burned.
- d. The second room was called The Holy of Holies (or the MOST HOLY... the HOLIEST), and it had a 2-3 inch thick curtain in front of it...
 - i. Inside this room was the Ark of the Covenant – a chest made of gold which had a cover on it called the “mercy seat.” (Exodus 25:17ff)
 - ii. The mercy seat had two angels with wings spread out on it, and there, between these two golden angels or cherubim, God chose to be present in a special way. (Numbers 7:89; 1 Samuel 4:4)
- e. Only the High Priest of Israel could ever enter to be in the Holy of Holies and with the Ark of the Covenant... and then, only one time per year.
 - i. On the Day of Atonement, or also known as Yom Kippur, the sins of the priests and all the people were atoned for by sacrifices.
 - ii. The High Priest would first offer a young bull for the sins of the priests, then take the blood into the Holy place and put blood on the incense altar... then, he would enter into the Holy of Holies, placing blood on the mercy seat.
 - iii. After that, 2 goats were chosen... as one goat was sacrificed and its blood was treated the same as the young bull – spreading it on the mercy seat and in the temple... while the second goat was sent into the wilderness (the scapegoat) which symbolized the sins of the people being placed on this animal.
- f. The author of Hebrews is explaining that all these Old Testament things took place to point to Jesus!

- i. Jesus is the way we can enter into the Holy of Holies... no longer blocked by a thick curtain, but His flesh (Jesus Himself) now stands before the Father.
 - ii. We no longer need the High Priest to sacrifice yearly on the Day of Atonement for our sins – we have a one time sacrifice in Jesus on the cross... and He is THE High Priest for all time.
- V. **Jesus, our Lord and Savior, gave us His blood and righteousness.**
 - a. By grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) in Jesus, we receive all the blessings and benefits that God has to offer – especially the forgiveness of our sins.
 - b. It goes back to that covering – that white robe that is bleached in the blood of Jesus – as God places a new covering over the sin and brokenness that we all have... and then calls us His child.
 - c. The Baptism we have is the first place God puts that robe of righteousness on us – and it represents the work of Jesus on the cross (the blood of Jesus) to pay for our sins and make us right by God.
 - d. God calls us perfect... God says He will remember our sins no more (Hebrews 10:17; Jeremiah 31:34) God says we are loved more than we can imagine... God says we are always welcome in His presence – no matter what.
 - e. I love the mercy seat as a covering, because it might be translated as “atonement cover” – which begs the question – what does atonement mean?
 - i. With God, this word is best understood by breaking it down – “at one”
 - ii. The “at one” with God means we are reconciled and our relationship is mended.
 - iii. We are “at one” with God because our Savior Jesus became the sacrifice – His blood poured out so that we might be covered in righteousness to be with God boldly... like a child with their parent.
- VI. **God covers us.**
 - a. No one had to tell God who we are – He already knows all our deepest darkest secrets – and the sin and brokenness that we could never fix.
 - b. And rather than qualify us by finding out if we were worth saving... He covered us with His robe of righteousness bleached in Jesus’ blood.
 - c. I know we aren’t supposed to judge a book by its cover – or a person by their clothing – but in this case, when someone is covered in Jesus’ blood and righteousness – we CAN judge them... as forgiven.
 - d. You are no longer an enemy of God and broken beyond repair – you are rescued, you are loved, you are covered – You are forgiven. Amen.