



race Church

The Rev. Dr. Matthew Calkins
Rector

PRIEST AND HEALER

Sermon for the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost, October 25, 2015

Readings: Job 42:1-6, 10-17; Psalm 34; Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52

Sermon text: For it is fitting that we should such a high priest... Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. Hebrews 7:27

The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way. Mark 10:51-52

This is a two-part sermon. The first part will be straightforward Bible teaching, because many people do not understand what our scriptures mean when they talk about priesthood and sacrifice and Jesus as the great high priest. The second part will look at our working with Jesus in his healing ministry.

First, why does the author of the letter to the Hebrews call Jesus a high priest? He wasn't one, at least not in the normal understanding of the term in Judaism. In Temple Judaism, the Levites, in charge of all things to do with the Temple, are descendants of Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Within the tribe of Levi, there is a priestly lineage descended from Aaron, brother of Moses; you are either in the lineage or not. Jesus, son of Mary, (adopted) son of Joseph, wasn't. Jesus descends from the lineage of Judah, another son of Jacob, through Jesse and David (you can trace his family tree in various ways in the New Testament genealogies preserved in Matthew and Luke). Because Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, and descended in the line of King David, he could claim or be proclaimed as the Son of David (the restored King of Israel, the new Messiah). And indeed it was for claims to these titles, as well as to being the "Son of the Most High" that he was killed.

Jesus never claimed personally to be a priest of the order of Aaron. (Fun facts: *kohane* is Hebrew for priest and anyone today with the surname Cohen is entitled to offer the Aaronic blessing; this is said together with a hand gesture, holding the hands with fingers spread in two sets, a gesture which Leonard Nimoy adapted for his Vulcan salute). When Jesus healed on the sabbath or pronounced God's forgiveness to those he healed, he was challenged by the Pharisees and Saduccees: what right did he have to do this? Jesus answered back by pointing to the example of John the Baptist—I will tell you my authority, if you tell me first by what authority did John offeedr a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins? The Pharisees and Sadduccees couldn't answer that one. Both John and Jesus had a higher authority than that of