

"Honor in Blue." – December 10, 2017
by Wayne J. Schneider – Soli Deo Gloria

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Hebrews 5:5–10

We need not sing "The blues," because Jesus has told us of the "Good News," that changes our 'blue' moods. We discovered last Sunday that Jesus is not only our Messiah but also our Prophet. This morning we will learn that he has additional roles: He is our Priest. These titles are not just honorific or lofty honors. They are entitlements the Holy Scripture makes about Jesus. In a word, Jesus is our "Honor in Blue."

If you attended this year's State Fair in Puyallup, I feel safe in stating that you saw at least one 'Blue' ribbon. It's likely that you know someone who has a room full of trophies and ribbons. Awards given for art, academics, music or athleticism.

Many of us are not that talented and would be happy with one blue award. It isn't possible to list all of the "Honors in Blue" Jesus has been gifted, but the Holy Scriptures shares at least one additional here: "*You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.*" (Hebrews 5:6)

You could not be awarded any more exalted honor. Melchizedek was the penultimate priest in the Old Testament. He lived before Aaron, the high priest of the Tabernacle. Aaron's family founded the Levitical Priesthood. Melchizedek was priest and king of Salem, the old name of Jerusalem. In the minds of the religious leaders of Judaism, he was considered the "ideal ruler of Israel."

He set up the meeting with Abraham, the father of Judaism, where he served bread and wine following the rescue of Abe's nephew, Lot. (Genesis 14:18-24) The 110th Psalm, a Messianic Psalm, confirms that Melchizedek was the most important priest known; and that an heir of King David would be ordained of God to an eternal priesthood like Melchizedek's. (Psalm 110:4)

The writer of the Book of Hebrews honors Melchizedek as the one who combines the offices of king and priest. (Psalm 110:4) This "Honor in Blue," is the most distinguishing, coming from ancient roots, as in the nobles who wear blue sashes to demonstrate high honor.

We of the 21st century, cannot see this uniqueness of being compared to Melchizedek because we do not understand it's ancient history. Therefore, we will benefit from a study of the words behind such history. This knowledge is necessary because these words are essential; their representation unequalled, and their truth unexcelled.

The Book of Hebrews instructs us to not consider Jesus as merely one prophet among many. Jesus is the grandest of all priests. Melchizedek was a "King of Peace." (Hebrews 7:2) "*Without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he continues a priest forever*" (Hebrews 7:3). Before Aaron in the time of Moses, Melchizedek was; and his authority and power was not controlled by the Jewish faith, just like Jesus.

Please note that Abraham recognized Melchizedek as priestly king, as he offered a tithe, gift of a 10%. The Aaronic priesthood died out, but Melchizedek's priesthood was established forever through Jesus. And, Jesus' "Honor in Blue" is because Jesus Christ is second to none.

You may be wondering why all of this is important. In the early church, Christians of Jewish descent were slandered for going against what we call 'Old Testament priesthood.' Proof of the priesthood of Jesus was a necessary defense.

Theologian Marcus Borg teaches that the responsibilities of a priest are related to sin, sacrifice and forgiveness. Is that not an excellent definition of the mission of Jesus Christ? It is a defining image of our relationship with God through Jesus. Borg also emphasizes that Jesus is not only a priest, even an "Honor in Blue" one like Melchizedek. He is a prophet too. But Jesus is not limited to these two definitions, for Jesus is far higher than that.

Even so, as we discover the complexity of our Savior's personality, we also uncover the truth that he is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. Jesus is God in the redemptive role as healer and guide.

While understanding the academics, we need to move beyond facts to reach a personal level. Knowledge of Jesus as having an "Honor in Blue" is vital for our faith. But, accepting Jesus personally, understanding his sacrifice for us, shows that we get it that he is a loving friend, rather than a somber winner or a cold, cosmic celebrity. Jesus is our priest who attends to us by healing our bodies and our souls.

Priests function as people who looked for those who might have physical diseases that would keep them ceremonially unclean and, therefore, unable to worship. A priest would then give instructions for purification. This is also a Spiritual function Jesus performs for us.

Jesus is our Great Physician. The four Gospels tell of many of Jesus' healings of, not only the ill, but the dead as well. The deaf hear, and the blind see. The hemorrhaging woman was cured. The mentally ill and the possessed we made whole again.

Jesus came for more than this though: He came to cure all humanity's sin-sickness. As a priest after Melchizedek, Jesus was unable to ignore all that is wrong with the world. Jesus comes to bring wholeness to our society. He cannot abide brokenness; he longs for wholeness.

It is said that the British Royal family was cruising on their yacht Britannia one night when the captain saw a bright, bluish light ahead in the mist. He sent an urgent message: "Please alter course!" The response was terse, "You alter course!" Angered by the arrogant response, he immediately responded, "This is John Jones, captain of the royal yacht. The Prince and Princess are on board. By the authority of the Queen, you change course!" The answer was instantaneous. "This is Fred Smith, keeper of this lighthouse for twenty-two years. I can't change course!"

There are times when each of us is tempted to 'take the helm' of our lives and chart our course. Some of us soon discover that there is a

"lighthouse," "a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." (Hebrews 5:6), by whose light we sail this life, completed, redeemed, and filled with hope and joy. This Advent season, let our High Priest, our Christ Child, once again, come into your hearts and lead your life to fulfillment. Alleluia. Amen.