

7 OCTOBER 2018

GENESIS 2; 18-24

HEBREWS 1: 1-4, 2:5-12

MARK 10: 2-16

PSALM 8

IN THE NAME OF GOD, FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT

I've been doing this a long time.

In many years of preaching I have learned that there are at least two subjects to avoid. One is to explain the true nature of the Holy Trinity – I usually gave that one to an assistant or Deacon.

The other is the subject of this morning's Gospel from Mark; divorce.

So, let's talk about the Letter to the Hebrews. It's not a letter and wasn't written to the Hebrews.

The writing received this name in the third century. The word Hebrews was probably given in response to references to the "Old Covenant" from Sinai and for its assertion that Jesus is a new High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Initially it had no title and the writer is still unknown.

I am sure you must have noticed that many, perhaps most, of the readings from the New Testament are from one of the letters of Paul. There are thirteen letters.

Hebrews isn't one of them.

Most of Paul's letters are addressed to some community of Christians that Paul had visited or planned to visit. Then there are two about people he knew, Titus and Timothy. Paul always seems to be addressing some problem particularly with new converts to Christianity, Jews and pagans.

Hebrews addresses another generation of Christians, educated people that would appreciate really good Greek.

Paul's writings are thought to have been made in the years from 50 to 57 AD. It is probable that Hebrews was written about 65 AD.

For many years the Letter to the Hebrews was attributed to Paul. Then somebody sat down and read it and realized that its message was entirely different, not at all like Paul's.

The subject is "The End Time."

For Paul the End Time will be in the future when "The trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised and Christians will rise to meet Jesus in the heavens."

In Hebrews the End Time is now.

This is the End Time. In the past prophets had foretold its coming; now it is here in the Incarnation, God actually becoming mortal with us in the presence of His Son whom we know as Jesus.

Jesus is the "Final Christian dispensation." Jesus' incarnation is beyond the bounds of our mortal tradition and history. Jesus is the unique and supreme messenger from God and the message is that the Old Covenant, so often broken by us, is now supplanted by a New Covenant in which Christ is the eternal High Priest for us.

In Christ God has given us the future and to be mortal, as Jesus is mortal. God makes Jesus, and God makes us "a little lower than the angels, crowned in glory and honor; God has put "all things under our feet."

Which reminds me of Father Joe Hunt, one of the faculty at Nashotah House Seminary when I was there. Father Hunt had been a Benedictine monk. He had left the order and married. He was a published authority on the Old Testament, Hebrew, and Latin.

Nashotah House is in southern Wisconsin. The weather is actually quite nice for a few months twice a year, late Spring and early Fall. It can be quite warm, briefly.

One morning Father Hunt was teaching old Testament from a well- worn Bible. The weather was warm, the windows were open, and wasps were flying around the classroom. It was highly distracting.

Finally, a wasp landed on Father Hunt's Bible. He slammed it shut, squashing the wasp. He said, in his deep voice: "That's what it means to have stewardship over God's creation."

But I digress.

How is it that we are stewards? Because in Jesus' fully mortal life like ours, including suffering and death, God sanctified Him and, in His sanctification, we, "brothers and sisters of Jesus," are sanctified with Him.

We all have one Father and that is God.

Jesus' mortal death and divine resurrection are allowed by God's Grace, a gift to the sanctified, a gift to us all.

IN HIS HOLY NAME