

He Put a New Song in My Mouth

Sermon Text: Psalm 40

Study Texts: Hebrews 10:1-18

Sermon Recap: The main idea of this week's sermon is this: The great God Who saves puts a new song in the mouth of the redeemed. Take time before your growth group to review the key points you noted from today's sermon.

Sermon Connection: Psalm 40 highlights a beautiful promise for the people of God: God alone saves, and He saves through His anointed Messiah. The Psalm prophetically highlights the demand for a once-for-all sacrifice for sin, thus the Psalm anticipated the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Reflecting on this truth, the writer of Hebrews gives further explanation of this theme in Hebrews 10. The Law, although holy and righteous—a reflection of God's character—was never meant to save sinful people. As the writer of Hebrews shows, the Law's intent was to point us to our need for Christ. And being our great Deliverer, our Great High Priest, Jesus offered the once-for-all sacrifice to cover sin and make us right with God. The new song of Psalm 40 is the great hope of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Goal: To see that the New Song of Psalm 40 is Jesus' accomplishing of salvation for us!

Lesson Points:

Point 1: The Law and the Need for a Greater Sacrifice (vv. 1-10)

Point 2: The Finished Work of Jesus (vv. 11-18)

The Context: Hebrews is a wonderful portion of Scripture. The main theme of Hebrews, if we were to summarize, is this: Christ is better. He is better than any angel, any priest, any king, or any old covenant institution. And not only is He better, these things also do not make sense without Him. Hebrews is written to a Jewish audience with the intent of showing how Jesus is the fulfillment of everything in the Old Testament. In chapter 10, the writer is explaining how Jesus is better than the old covenant sacrificial system, and more specifically, how Jesus is the fulfillment of the old system.

Opening Question: Can you think of a story when something that came later in the story helped make sense of the earlier details?

Transition Statement: The Bible makes use of this literary feature. Jesus Himself, as the writer of Hebrews shows us, is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. It is in and through Jesus Christ that the earlier portions of Scripture make sense and gain far deeper meaning.

Point 1 - The Law and the Need for a Greater Sacrifice (vv. 1-10)

Verse 1 states that *“the law has but a shadow...”* Read back through 7:11-9:28 and note how the Law provides a shadow for the coming of Jesus.

7:11-28 - Jesus is the better High Priest the Law demanded, in the order of Melchizedek. The priests who arose under the Law could not do what the Law demanded, so God sent Christ. In essence, Jesus establishes a better priesthood for us, where He serves as our perfect Priest.

8:1-9:10 - Jesus establishes a better covenant. The Law was given by God as a covenant, but the Law was never meant to be a means of salvation for God’s people. In establishing a new covenant, Jesus shows us the true purpose of the Law, which is to point us to Him. The tabernacle, as v. 2 notes, was meant to teach us to look for a better tent (tabernacle), which is Jesus Himself. The physical tabernacle represented God’s dwelling place with man. It was only an image of what Christ would do by uniting man to God by means of His Own blood.

9:11-28 - Christ appears as the great High Priest, Who, by means of His Own perfect blood, simultaneously accomplishes two things: He mediates for the people as our High Priest, and He offers His own blood for the sacrifice. The many high priests and ongoing sacrifices throughout Israel’s history all pointed to the moment Jesus would go to the cross.

Verse 3 notes that sacrifices offered under the Old Covenant were a daily reminder of sin. What was the purpose of this daily reminder?

Under the old covenant, the Law demanded sacrifices for sin. Because the Jewish people, like us, were entirely sinful to the core, daily sacrifice for sin was necessary. People sinned everyday, thus sacrifice was demanded everyday. If we had been a part of Old Testament Israel, we would have grown accustomed to the steady column of smoke ascending from the Tabernacle/Temple. The daily need for sacrifice was a reminder of the ongoing need for forgiveness and redemption. The writer is also highlighting the fact that these daily animal sacrifices could never truly atone for sin.

Verses 5-7 quote directly from Psalm 40:6-8. What is the writer of Hebrews doing by quoting from Psalm 40 in this New Testament context?

Two things are happening in the quotation. First, the writer of Hebrews is demonstrating to his Jewish audience that he is not the first to say the old covenant sacrifices were never

meant to atone for sin. In Psalm 40:6-8, David highlights that God is not pleased with burnt offerings and sin offerings. David's point is the same as the writer of Hebrews: that atonement for sin demands something greater than ritualistic animal sacrifice. The second thing the writer is doing is highlighting Jesus as the better and permanent sacrifice. Just as David is anticipating a coming greater sacrifice, so the writer of Hebrews is explaining how Jesus is that greater sacrifice Who has come!

Verses 8-9 highlight two different forms of devotion to God. What two forms are in view here, and what is the purpose of describing the two?

The first type of devotion is that of religious practice, or "religiosity." The text states, "*You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings...*" The ritual sacrifices were never meant to be an end in themselves. On the contrary, God designed them to point to the grand salvation He would accomplish through His Son, Jesus Christ. But, because of sin, the Jews committed themselves to the ritual instead of to God; they committed themselves to religious practice over holiness.

The second form of devotion is that of wholehearted love for the Lord and His will. In v. 9, the context is applied to Christ, Who came to do the will of His Father by offering Himself as the better and final sacrifice. But in His sacrifice, we also see what true devotion to God looks like. We see what the new song of Psalm 40 looks like. It looks like a life devoted to God Himself and not empty ritual.

How does the writer bring clarity to his point in v. 10? How does this verse help to clarify Ps. 40:6-8?

Among the many good things we find in Jesus, we see what true devotion to God looks like. We see that empty religion is not loving devotion. On the contrary, empty religion is offensive to God, so much so that He says He takes no pleasure in it. In offering Himself to God, Jesus fulfilled the will of God by accomplishing true redemption. When Jesus went to the cross, He showed what all the sacrifices and religious rituals were really about. When He went to the cross, He showed what a true Priest does. On the cross, Jesus contrasts the superficial holiness of animal sacrifices with His Own true saving work.

Application/Transition question: The Jews found themselves trusting more in their religious practice and behavior than in trusting God. Their song was a tune of vain self-glory and not the new song that God gives. In the same way, are there areas of your life where you are trusting more in your behavior than in God's grace?

Point 2 - The Finished Work of Jesus (vv. 11-18)

Under the old system, the old covenant, the priest would stand at his post conducting the ongoing, daily business of sacrifices. What is the writer highlighting about Jesus in vv. 11-13? As noted earlier, under the old covenant, the demand for sacrifices was ongoing. It was a daily ritual, and thus, the priests had daily duties. This work stretched throughout numerous generations of Jews. The priest was a crucially important role in the life of Israel, for without the priest, there was no way to be right with God on an ongoing basis. The repetitive nature of the sacrifice demonstrated that sin was never truly dealt with. There was always an ongoing need, that is, until Jesus. The writer here highlights that Jesus' sacrifice was not like others. His was not a sacrifice in need of repeating, for He offered Himself as a sacrifice once-for-all for the people of God. To signify that He has indeed completed this work, Jesus sat down. There is no longer a need for the ongoing priestly ministry; Jesus has completed it.

What does the "*waiting*" in v. 13 signify about this present age?

Christ's waiting in v. 13 highlights an important truth for the Church in this present age, and that truth is that we are awaiting the final completion of Christ's redemption. Through the cross, Jesus brought an end to the old covenant sacrificial system by offering Himself, the perfect Sacrifice. His resurrection shows that He is the great High Priest, and His being seated shows that the work is, indeed, completed. But, we live in what some call the already/not yet portion of God's plan. While the work is done, we are awaiting the day when God completes it, when He brings this life to a close and begins the next. We still struggle against sin in this present age, but we do so with the hope of Christ's completed work. We have a new song to sing because of the gospel.

How does v. 14 highlight Jesus' being a better Priest and Sacrifice? How does this put a new song in the mouth of the redeemed?

The Bible is clear, both implicitly and explicitly, that animal sacrifices can never take away the sins of mankind. In addition, no earthly priest could ever stand in the place of the people to achieve redemption. Verse 14 highlights the fact that Jesus is both the once and final sacrifice for sin; nothing else is needed, for His sacrifice has fully satisfied the wrath of God. It also highlights how, unlike earthly priests, Jesus is able to stand as our great High Priest forever. His single offering was so complete, so powerful, and so rich that nothing more is needed.

Verses 15-18 quote from Jeremiah's New Covenant prophecy. What is significant about this Old Testament quotation and its relation to the work of Jesus?

While there is much that can be noted from this Old Testament quotation, we will concentrate on its picture of the work of God. Jeremiah notes that in the New Covenant, that is, the gospel of Jesus Christ, God will ensure the work of Christ is rightly applied to His people. "He will put His Laws on our hearts and write them on our minds." Furthermore, our sins will be no more. All of this stands upon the completed work of Jesus.

How does this understanding of the New Covenant further explain the new song of Ps. 40? One commentator notes, “Instead of defeat and subjugation, the Lord had given the king the sweet experience of victory. God had been faithful to His promises by placing him firmly on the rock, symbolic of God’s protection.”¹ In the same way, through the gospel, God has given us the sweet experience victory over sin. In Christ, we see that God has been faithful to His promise to save, to place His law within our hearts and upon our minds. In Christ, we have been set firmly upon the rock of the gospel. In Christ, we have been given a new song to sing with our whole life.

The Big Picture - A New Song, a New Life

It is difficult to overstate the new reality the gospel brings in the lives of God’s people. As Psalm 40 states, “*He drew me up from the pit of destruction...and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.*” The salvation offered through the gospel of Jesus Christ is transformative. It truly does remove us from the miry bog of sin and set us upon the solid ground of life in and through the Word of God. Psalm 40 reminds that the gospel creates in us a new song, a new way of life. Hebrews 10 provides further insight by showing that Christ, once-for-all, accomplished salvation by fulfilling the Law. Whereas the Law itself could provide a veiled image of the things to come, in Christ, we have the fulfillment of the Law and the hope of salvation. Unlike the priests of the old covenant, Jesus has taken His seat beside the Father, a declaration to the world that salvation is accomplished and available to all who would believe and follow Him. A new hope, a new way of life, a new song...

Application Questions

- How does your life sing the new song of God’s salvation?
- In what ways are you teaching your family to love and trust God’s salvation?
 - How does your parenting teach your children to trust more in your grace than in their behavior?
- In what ways can you/your growth group sing God’s song of salvation to your neighborhood/community?

¹ William VanGemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Psalms*. Pg. 365.