

Jesus Sits  
Hebrews 10:11-25

I have a question for you. To help you come up with some answers, I want you to imagine that today is the first time you have ever attended a Lutheran worship service. If this was your first time here, what would you find peculiar, or a bit baffling?

*(Listen to answers, and comment on them.)*

I want to come back to the standing and sitting thing. We do a lot of up and down. We stand and we sit. We stand up again, and sit down again. This morning we stood up for the invocation and confession and absolution. Then we sat down for the hymn. Then we were back up again for the kyrie, hymn of praise, and collect of the day. We sat for the readings, except that we stood back up again for the Gospel. You took a seat for the next hymn and there you remain. But you will be back up again for the communion liturgy, down for the distribution until it is your turn, then you are back up again. Neither of the communion hymns have doxology verses, so you will be seated for those. Then you will be back up again for the rest of the liturgy. And I'm not sure why, because we sit for the rest of the hymns, you will stay standing for the last one, I think.

All of this to lead into the contrast we have in our text between standing and sitting. Those standing are the priests: *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.* The One sitting is Jesus: *But when Christ had offered*

*for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God...*

The priests stand and do the same thing day after day after day. Jesus takes care of things once and for all and sits down.

What is our proper posture, standing or sitting?

Should we be standing like the priests offering our sacrifices? We do sing in the offertory, "I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and will call on the name of the Lord." That sounds pretty priestly. But the problem with this posture is that it does not work. *[E]very priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.*

God Himself established the system of sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. How can the writer of Hebrews say those sacrifices can never take away sins? Did the blood of those animals take away the people's sin, or did their sin remain? Yes!

The sins of the people were taken away from them. The people were forgiven. The sins of the people were taken away from them, but the sins were not gone. They were set aside in a great heap that kept getting bigger and bigger. It's not too hard for me to picture a sort of giant landfill. The sacrifice is made, the sins are taken away from the people and added to the pile.

What if we take the posture of standing to work out our own salvation? Is that going to work? Can we ever do enough good things to make up for all the bad? No. In fact, Scripture

tells us that even our most righteous acts are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). If we, in any way, try to stand on our own merits, we simply and sadly add to the pile. Our sins remain.

It is much better to sit and be served. Jesus used those very words to describe what He has done for you. Mark records what Jesus said in chapter 10: *the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many* (v. 10).

Jesus died for the sins of all, but some would still try to stand on their own. Many, however, would hear this good news and believe it. They would, you would, sit and be served, and be saved.

When Jesus taught about the kingdom of God, His disciples did not stand, they sat at His feet. When He washed their feet the day before He would die for them they did not stand. They sat to be served by their Lord. When Jesus was nailed to a cross for them, they did not stand on their own loyalty or great deeds. They had all abandoned Him, run away, and hid behind locked doors.

Our posture of salvation is not standing on anything good we have done, if so, we would surely fall. Our posture of salvation is one of sitting and being served.

What we believe about communion is peculiar to some, and a bit baffling. Jesus said, *This is my Body... This is my blood...* and so we believe it even though we cannot fully understand it. He said it is for the forgiveness of sins, and so we believe it. It is all about Jesus and faith in His words. It is not about us.

We sometimes talk about “taking communion”. Those are not the best words to use. Our posture is not one of taking, but of receiving. Whether we are standing or kneeling, we are the ones being served. It is not what we do that brings the forgiveness of sins. Jesus is there in His body and blood serving us. He is giving to us the forgiveness He earned for us on His cross.

Once and for all Jesus sacrificed Himself for the forgiveness of sins. He took the great heap and carried it to His cross. There He suffered and died for sins to get rid of them forever. They are not simply set aside to be brought up and held against you later. That is what the devil does to try to torment us and take our eyes off of what Jesus has done.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away your sin and removes it from you as far as the east is from the west so that they are remembered no more. It amazes me every time I think about it or say it, and yet it is true: God forgives you all your sin and forgets it. It is baffling and yet true: God forgives and forgets all your sin because of His Son, Jesus Christ.

So, are you ready to stand? That’s what we will do as we join in confessing our faith using the words of the Nicene Creed. But what is our preferred posture? Sitting. We may sing, “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus,” but what we really want and need is to sit at Jesus’ feet and have Him serve us. And as peculiar and baffling as that is, that’s what your Lord does for you. Amen.