

Lectionary Texts for March 17, 2024 • *Fifth Sunday in Lent* - Year B

Jeremiah 31:31-34 • Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:9-16 • Hebrews 5:5-10 • John 12:20-33

---



### **Hebrews 5:5-10**

*The Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek*, c. 1545, by Giorgio Vasari, Italian, 1511-1574

Oil and tempera on panel, 12 5/8" x 33 9/16"

The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you" as he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

– Hebrews 5:5-6

Melchizedek. Who was he? And what is meant by "the order of Melchizedek"?

Genesis 14:18 introduces Melchizedek to the reader. A war between nations had been going on for years, and in the process one side overwhelmed Sodom, taking all the possessions of the town and kidnapping Abram's nephew Lot. When Abram learned of this he took his forces and "Then he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his nephew Lot with his goods, and the women and the people." (Gen. 14:16)

When Abram returned to Sodom, the king of Sodom went out to meet him, "And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!' And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything." (Gen 14:18-20)

We have no additional information regarding Melchizedek. Mother, father, birth, death, genealogy, nothing. It is clear, however, that the text suggests that God has established a

*Continued*

relationship with Melchizedek and established the Order of Melchizedek. With no beginning of days or ending of days (Hebrews 7:3), the narrative leaves open the possibility that Melchizedek's order is forever. With the person of Jesus having the roles of Most High Priest, and King, Melchizedek may be considered to be a pointer, a signpost, to Jesus.

An Italian Renaissance painter and architect, Giorgio Vasari was effectively what would now be called the Minister of Culture to the Medici court in Florence. He is best known for his work *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, which is considered the ideological foundation of all art-historical writing, including the term "Renaissance," based on his description of Giotto's style.

Preceding Vasari as a painter and architect in Florence, Giotto di Bondone (Italian, known as Giotto, c.1267-1337) "drew all his figures and their postures according to nature," which Vasari described as making a decisive break from the prevalent Byzantine style, "...introducing the technique of drawing accurately from life, which had been neglected for more than two hundred years." Vasari's description of Giotto's new manner of painting as a *rinascita* (rebirth, Italian) prompted French historian and writer Jules Michelet (1798-1874) to suggest the adoption of Vasari's concept, using the term *Renaissance* (rebirth, French) to distinguish the cultural change.

Even modern biographers of Italian Renaissance artists cite information about them from this Vasari's seminal work, although it is now recognized that it had many factual errors.

— Art curated and narrative provided by Norman Mahan  
Document edited and produced by Donna V. Adair  
Lay members, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Houston

---

---

### **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt — a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

### **Psalm 51:1-12**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.  
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.  
Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.  
Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.  
You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

**or**

### **Psalm 119:9-16**

How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word.  
With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments.  
I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you.  
Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes.  
With my lips I declare all the ordinances of your mouth.  
I delight in the way of your decrees as much as in all riches.  
I will meditate on your precepts, and fix my eyes on your ways.  
I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

### **Hebrews 5:5-10**

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

### **John 12:20-33**

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say — ‘Father, save me from this hour’?

“No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder.

Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”

Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.