



## My Own High Priest

Thanks be to God, I have a High Priest who...found me precious even in my state of jealous rebellion.

Nowadays the career choice of “High Priest” doesn’t make the “Ten Hottest Careers for College Graduates” list, but way back when the Old Testament was cutting edge, it was the most prestigious job you could hold. Back then, God was Commander-in-Chief, and the high priest was a very hands-on Chief of Staff, who controlled the public’s access to the Oval Office.

The first High Priest of Israel was Moses’ big brother Aaron. He was “set apart from the common people” and wore a pure gold medallion on his turban engraved with the words, “Set apart as holy to the Lord” (Exodus 28:1,36 NLT). Although God lived in the tabernacle among his people, Aaron was the mediator of their relationship, bringing sin offerings from the people to the Lord, and bringing forgiveness from the Lord back to the people.

One might think a job like this would go to someone’s head, and even if someone in such a prominent post could stay humble, it would be hard to handle the tabloid rumors. Jealousy over the rich and famous isn’t a 21st century phenomenon. In fact, Aaron himself suffered a bout of jealousy over Moses’ intimate connection with God, making his own tabloid headlines (Numbers 12:1-15). But God forgave him, and then allowed Aaron to face the heat of jealousy for himself.

It started when a rabble of disenfranchised Levites, lead by a guy named Korah, decided that Aaron and Moses had “gone too far” and had no right “to act as though [they were] greater than anyone else among all these people of the Lord” (Numbers 16:3, NLT).

God didn’t like this blatant rejection of his appointed ones, so he caused the ground to open up and swallow the rebel leaders. That cured the problem for a day, but the next morning jealousy surged back in full force. This time the Lord’s anger blazed quickly and fiercely. Moses and Aaron had to act fast—before all the children of Israel were destroyed.

As a deadly plague begins to rage through the camp, Moses turns to Aaron, tosses him an incense burner with coals from the altar of the Lord and says, “Quick! Run through the people and make atonement for them.”

So, there goes Aaron, running right into the plague, right into the midst of the people who were rejecting him, and there “he stood between the living and the dead until the plague was stopped” (Numbers 16:48, NLT). Now, why would he do that? They had rejected him, accused him, threatened him and he still rushed headlong into their midst to save them. Why not just let them get what was coming?

It’s the same question I ask every time I think about my own High Priest. A man I know who could have had the world as his footstool, but instead lived as a servant. He was humble, gracious, courageous and forgiving. Despite my unworthiness, he instead ran quickly toward me with the holy incense of his grace to shatter death’s hold for eternity. Why would he do that?

I don’t know if I could do what Aaron did and rush in to save people who had turned on me. And I absolutely know I would be more inclined to send lightning bolts from heaven than have my hands and feet nailed to a wooden cross by the very people I ran to save.

But thanks be to God, I have a High Priest who didn’t hesitate. He found me precious even in my state of jealous rebellion. I want to be like him. When I see hurt and sin and plague, I don’t want to stand back and wait for the sinners to “get theirs.” I want to follow Moses’ advice, “Quick! Run!” Not away, not to safety, not to the mountain of my self-perceived holiness, but straight into the midst of the plague—being a light, a sweet smelling incense of the Lord, willing to stand between the living and the dead, the saved and the unsaved that they may know him by his grace. Will you join me? □

—Susan Reedy