

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 22:34-46
October 15th, 2017
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Greenville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Son of David

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today, our Lord + Jesus silences all His critics. We are told by the Evangelist St. Matthew that our Lord had already silenced the Sadducees. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection of the dead, so they attempt to come up with a scenario which disproves the resurrection: one woman, seven brothers, all were married to her on account of Jewish marital laws, whose wife would she be in the resurrection. However, they neither understood Heaven, nor the resurrection, because they did not believe it to be true. No one is given in marriage in Heaven. Furthermore, God is a god of the living, as He proclaimed to Moses: I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was still their God, because they were still living in eternity, even though their bodies rested in the grave. They did not understand Who God was and is. With this the Sadducees were silenced.

So then, the Pharisees take their opportunity to question the Lord + Jesus. Which is the greatest commandment? I suppose they thought our Lord would have to pick one of the Ten, and then they could argue for some other commandment. But our Lord does not fall for it. He sums up all Ten Commandments into two: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. And the second is similar: Love your neighbor as yourself. Upon these two Commandments hang all the Law and Prophets. The Commandments are summed up in love. Love for the Lord God and love for your neighbor.

But, just like the Sadducees did not understand Who God is, the Pharisees also do not understand Who God is. Even more so, they did not understand Who the Messiah is, or what He was supposed to be. For our Lord goes on to quote King David from Psalm 110, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" The point the Psalmist is trying to make is that the Son of David—the Messiah—is both God and man.

One might wonder what this has to do with the question on the Commandments. If a person does not understand Who the Messiah is, they cannot understand the Commandments. For just as the Commandments are fulfilled through love, both for God and man, the Messiah, who is the embodiment of God's love for us, must be both God and man. For it is only a perfect man who can fulfill the requirements of love in the Law, and it is only God, who can make the perfect fulfilling of the Law by that man for all people. In other words, only a Messiah Who is both God and man can fulfill the Law perfectly for all mankind, and offer up His life as a ransom for all mankind.

But the Pharisees did not understand this. They thought, like so many people today, that they were saved through their being a good person; through their keeping of the Law. Many people try to good work their way into Heaven. Our works do not merit us salvation. Certainly we should obey the Ten Commandments, because it is what our Lord wants, and in faith, we want to do what the Lord demands, but we should never think that our obedience to the Law merits our salvation, or even a special place in Heaven. Works are proof that faith is living in us. Our good works are our way to show love for God and our neighbor. As our final hymn states, "Yet faith alone doth justify, works serve thy neighbor and supply the proof that faith is living."

For our salvation we must turn in faith to the Lord Who sits at the right hand of the Lord. The Lord + Jesus Whose enemies are now His footstool, because the Lord God accepted His sacrifice for us on the tree of the holy cross.

The Commandments are fulfilled by the Lord. The Commandments are fulfilled for us by the Lord + Jesus. It is only the God Who is man Who was able to fulfill the Commandments. If love is the fulfillment of the Law, then the Lord God shows His love by coming down to Earth in order to be born of the Virgin Mary, and take upon Himself our flesh, so that He might fulfill the requirements of the Law. His incarnation shows His love for us. It shows that from the very beginning of His conception and taking upon Himself our flesh that He loved us. Even more so, it shows His love for God, because the Son obeyed the Father's will and was born of the Virgin Mary.

Mankind was unable to fulfill the Law perfectly. The Pharisees thought that if they knew which one was the greatest, then they could concentrate on keeping that one, and then they would have salvation. We daily sin much. We neglect our God daily when we doubt His Word or neglect our use of it. We show our lack of love for our God when we neglect to pray to Him and ask Him for all the blessings He wishes to bestow upon us. We do just as poorly at showing love for our neighbor. This may even be worse, because our neighbor is seen by us, and yet we neglect to help and serve him on a daily basis. If we cannot help our neighbor who we see, how can we ever expect to love and serve a God Who is not seen by us.

It is for this reason that our Lord + Jesus Christ takes upon Himself our flesh, so that He might fulfill the Law for us. This is how much He loves you! He humbles Himself to become a man, in order to save you. He gives Himself over to the Pharisees and Sadducees—who He had silenced to the point no one would dare ask Him any more questions—to suffer trial, beatings, scourging and death. All this He does out of love for you. He does all this as a man—as the Son of David.

In His sacrifice on the cross He shows that He indeed loves the Lord God with all His heart, with all His soul, and with all His mind for He willingly obeys the Father's will. He obeys the Father's will for you and for your salvation. He is imprisoned and put on trial while you go free. He suffers pain and torment while you are not subjected to the suffering He endured. He endures death while you get eternal life. This is the Word that brings us joy. For it is real and substantial. It is joy that goes deep into our heart, soul and mind, for it involves spiritual and eternal realities for us. Realities that cannot be taken away, destroyed or left to rot. They are ours because our Lord and God Who is both God and man so wills it to be for us.

The Sadducees and the Pharisees did not want the Lord + Jesus to be the Messiah, and so they tested Him with questions about God and eternity. But, they neither knew God, nor understood Him, for in order to fully understand God He must be understood according to the second Person of the Trinity; He must be understood according to the Lord Who took on our flesh.

Just as the Sadducees were silenced before the beginning of the Gospel reading, on account of their unbelief in the Lord + Jesus, so also are the Pharisees silenced at the end of the Gospel reading,

so that no one dared ask Him any more questions. It was their unbelief that led to their silence. For both the Sadducees and Pharisees refused to see the Lord + Jesus as the One, True Messiah Who is both the fulfillment of marriage, since He is the Bridegroom of His Bride the Church. And, He is the fulfillment of the Law, for He loved His creation—He loved us—enough to humble Himself to the pain and shame of the cross, so that we might be ransomed from our failure to love God and our neighbor.

He has loved us to the point of death. We now cling to Him in faith for all our needs, especially our need for salvation from our enemies. He has defeated our enemies once and for all on the holy cross. He has made them His footstool and crushed the head of the serpent who deceived our first parents in the Garden once and for all. He now bestows upon us faith to believe in Him and rejoice that we are clothed with His righteousness and His works. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.