

Trinity XVIII

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[0 : 00] In our gospel text of Matthew chapter 22, our Lord raises a question to the Pharisees regarding the nature of the Messiah, that is, the Christ.

Jesus asked these religious leaders, whose son is the Christ? In other words, who is the father of this promised Messiah, the Christ, the anointed king of Israel?

They answered him, he is the son of the great king David. So our Lord asks a follow-up question. Then why does David call him, that is, his son, Lord? How can the greatest king of Israel, David, call his son, Lord?

Which we read about in Psalm 110. And there were crickets. No response. Just silence from these religious experts of the law.

[1 : 11] Now we know the answer to the question that baffled the Pharisees because Jesus is the eternal God who came into this world to save us, taking our nature, taking our flesh upon himself.

Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. And this lineage from both Mary and Joseph goes back to the great king David.

But David anticipated one greater, a greater king than himself, whom he calls Lord.

And this greater king, Jesus, came to rescue us from the world, the flesh, and the devil, to use the language of our collect this morning.

But the bigger issue is that these religious leaders are missing the all-important point that Jesus is indeed Lord.

[2 : 15] Jesus is that long-awaited king, but he is more than just a mere earthly ruler. He is Yahweh. He is the Lord in human flesh.

Jesus is the one with whom the great king David anticipated. He is the one that he foretold. And the very first creed of the church is simply this.

Jesus is Lord. Now by saying that Jesus is Lord, this is a radical, this is a bold declaration to say the least.

And saying that Jesus is Lord means that leaders like Nebuchadnezzar or even Caesar, nor any other great rulers of empires, they are not Lord.

This means that no country or institution is Lord over the earth. And that includes the United States.

[3 : 22] And this also means that we are not Lord over our own lives. This means there is only one Lord.

And that is Jesus. Eternal God who has come in human flesh. This is the most audacious statement that not only has ramifications for the church.

It is one of the most radical statements for politics as well. If Jesus is Lord, then all other rulers, whether past, present, or even future, they are all subservient to him.

This means everyone, everyone, including these religious lawyers, these religious experts, will one day bow the knee to Jesus.

But the next question is, if Jesus is Lord, what kind of Lord is he? Well, he is the one who tells us to pay taxes to our earthly governors.

[4 : 43] He is the one that says that his kingdom is not of this world, meaning it's not bound to the tricks and the manipulation found in human politicking and scheming.

As a matter of fact, our Lord's kingdom is one where love reigns supreme. And that's why we hear in our gospel text, our Lord saying that all scripture, all of scripture can be summarized in two commandments, which we say at the beginning of every mass, love God with all of our being and love our neighbor.

That is all other human beings as much as we love ourselves. Friends, our relationship to God is more than checking off boxes.

Like if we dare labor on the Sabbath, or if we wear certain types of clothing made from certain types of material, or whether we can eat certain kinds of food or drink certain kinds of drink, or if we bow at the right place at the liturgy, or make the sign of the cross at the right place at the liturgy, or if we say the right phrases with proper Elizabethan English.

Our calling is to love God. And to love others. Period. Some of you have probably heard me tell the story about the time I got on an elevator at an all-Jewish hospital in Brooklyn, New York, where I served as a pastor.

[6 : 28] I was going to see a parishioner who was very ill. And the elevator was pre-programmed on Saturdays, the day I was there, to stop at every single floor, because to push a button was considered work, therefore a violation of the Sabbath.

And yes, I had to go 14 floors. And those 14 floors seemed like an eternity, as we stopped at every one of them until I reached my destination.

And this was especially uncomfortable for the one guy wearing a black clerical. Friends, our Lord is concerned far more than you eating pork or shrimp.

His desires that we love, not merely in words or checking off certain boxes, but by loving him with our entire being.

And then loving others who are made in his image with a selfless fervor and zeal. Our Lord came not to set up some kingdom in Jerusalem.

[7 : 44] He came so that the whole world would know what love really is. He came to offer his own life. That's what love is.

He came to offer his own life.

He came to offer his own life. He came to offer his own life. He came to offer his own life. Taking his rightful place as ruler and king over all of heaven and all of earth. And one day, all, every single human being that has lived, will bow down to him in homage and in worship.

But as Lord and master of our lives, his mandate for us is to love. To love.

Not just with our words, but sacrificially giving ourselves to others. He calls us to love him. Giving him all adoration, all worship, and all obedience.

[9 : 20] And then venerating and respecting others by serving our neighbor, other human beings who are made in his image.

Why? Why? So that then his love might extend through us and reach out to the world.

Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.