

Κύριε, βοήθει.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

“Expect More”

Our Redeemer Dallas 2020

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, “What do you think about the Christ?” Matthew 22:42

A lot of *questions* in today’s Gospel reading! One of the Pharisees asks Jesus a question. Jesus responds with a question of His own. As a matter of fact,

This whole chapter of Matthew is *filled* with questions,

including some pretty famous ones, like, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” and one rather ridiculous one from the Sadducees about a woman whose husband has died and she marries each of his seven brothers in turn, and so, “In the resurrection,” they ask, “whose wife will she be?”

One of my favorite things I saw on the internet this week was a black and white picture of Yoda from *Star Wars: Episode VI—Return of the Jedi*, with the caption, “Once I became a parent I finally understood the scene where Yoda gets so tired of answering Luke’s questions he just dies.” I do wonder if that’s how Jesus felt sometimes, especially since a lot of the questions He got were *bad* questions. Like the one from the Sadducees. They weren’t really looking for a serious answer; they were just *messing* with Jesus! They didn’t even *believe* in a resurrection! And the lawyer who asked Jesus about the law in today’s reading, he only did so in order to *test* Him (verse 35).

Leave it to Jesus, then, to ask a *good* question, one that no one else was asking:

“What do you think about the Christ?”

That really is *the* question. It’s not just important, but the way you answer it affects the way you answer all *other* questions. He’s not even asking if they believe that *He* is the Christ. He just wants to know what they *think* about Him, this Messiah they’ve all been waiting for. He tees them up with an easy follow-up, asking, “Who’s son is He?” They answer, “The son of David,” obviously. We’re talking about one of the most famous promises in all the Old Testament, where God says to David, “I will raise up your Offspring after you...and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever” (2 Sam. 7:12, 13). Israel hadn’t had a king for some 400 *years*, not since the Exile, and so this was one promise they were still waiting to be fulfilled.

But then Jesus throws them *this* curveball: “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls Him Lord, saying [in Psalm 110], “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies under Your feet””? If then David calls Him Lord, how is He his son?” And no one can answer Him a word. They don’t know! They have *zero* explanation. After all, this is *David* we’re talking about. David was no underling; he was *king*, the best king Israel ever *had!* It was David who prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone! It was David who struck down his ten thousands! It was David who brought peace to the land of Israel, subduing all her enemies! Who could be better than David? Whom would David actually deign to call “Lord”? Certainly not one of his sons! Not even *Solomon* was worthy of that honor. And so, from that day no one dared to ask Jesus any more questions.

But Jesus had the answer to His. What did they think about the Christ? Apparently, not much. To them, He was *merely* the son of David, a *human* offspring descended from his house: a king, yes, but a king *like any other*. This explains why they couldn’t answer Jesus’ question. To sit at God’s right hand and be called “Lord” is to be God *Himself*. No one sits *next* to God; and yet here was David saying, in the Spirit, that his son *would*. It didn’t make any sense!

Of course, the *real* problem is their expectations of the Messiah were *too low*. There’s something like a paraphrase of a famous quote from Charles Spurgeon that goes, “If your sin is small then your Savior will be small also.” Well, the Pharisees had a small Savior. They didn’t think *enough* of Him, no doubt owing to the fact they didn’t think much of their sin, either. They weren’t looking for a Savior from *sin*; they were looking for someone to prevail over their *political* adversaries, to strike down his ten thousand *Romans* and bring peace to the land of Israel once again. *That’s* what they thought about the Christ.

What do *you* think?

You’ll notice Jesus doesn’t answer His own question; He leaves it hanging. “What do *you* think about the Christ?” the text seems to be asking. And like I said before, that really is *the* question. What are your expectations of God and the One He’s chosen to save you? Is He a *small* Savior or a *great* one? Are you a good person who’s simply made some mistakes, or are you a poor, miserable *sinner*? It’s important. The way you answer will affect the way you answer all other questions. It’ll affect the way you see the *world*. If you’re a good person, then the *world’s* the problem, and you’re just a victim, who deserves so much more. But if you’re a sinner, then the problem is *you*. *You’re* the one to blame, and that doesn’t feel so good.

But who likes to admit their faults? We would *much* rather believe that we've got a handle on this, that we're doing our best, and our best is enough, than accept the problem is as bad as God tells us it is in His Word. Or do we think He's just kidding when He says things like, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21); or when He inspires the apostle Paul to write, "I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh" (Rom. 7:18); or when He sends His own Son to die on a cross, to suffer *greatly* for the sins of the world, because only by the blood of a spotless Lamb can the wrath of God be satisfied? We are *not* good people, and our sin is *not* small: it is *great*, much greater than we know. And if all Jesus was was a *political* Savior, the son of David and nothing more, then we of all people are most to be pitied.

But that's *not* who Jesus is. He is *not* a political Savior, someone to ensure that you get to live your best life now. Frankly, that's a pretty low expectation. You've got to think *bigger*—bigger than David, even. What's bigger than David? How about the Son of God? Who else could be David's Lord? No one sits *next* to God, except God *Himself*. And that's exactly what Jesus was trying to get these people to see: that their expectations of the Christ were *too low*; that the One God chose to save us isn't just a man, a mere human being, but He is also *God*—David's *son*, yet David's *Lord*—not to save us from the Romans, or a virus, or whatever else might be coming down road, but to save us from our *real* problem, which is sin and everlasting death.

See, when it comes to Jesus, who *is* the Christ, the fulfillment of God's promise, as the angel Gabriel said to Mary (Luke 1:32-33), He doesn't just meet our expectations: He *exceeds* them. Yes,

With Jesus, you get *more* than expected.

Would it be *nice* if Jesus conquered our worldly enemies and established a visible kingdom here on earth? Sure. But Jesus'll do you one *better*: by His perfect life, death, and resurrection from the dead, He forgives you all your sin; He gives you new life in the Spirit, promising to raise *you* one day from the dead to live with Him in his *heavenly* kingdom forever; He crushes the head of your *true* adversary the devil, who is now but a conquered foe. Christ Jesus may be David's son, but He is also David's Lord, who upholds the universe by the word of His power, subduing every enemy under His feet.

Which means, dear child of God, that you have nothing to fear. Your sin may be great, but *so is your Savior*. You don't need to rely on your *works* to save you. Your life, your health, your wealth, they're all *secondary*; or, as Pauls put it so well in Philippians,

I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them

as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (3:7-11)

Paul’s expectations of the Christ couldn’t have been higher. He’s the one who confessed that nothing good dwelt in him (Rom. 7:18); and yet, he had every confidence in Jesus, so that whether he lived or died everything would turn out for his deliverance: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

And why shouldn’t it be? If God is for us, if He did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, who can be against us? We don’t just have a king here in time, but as the baptized who believe we have One for *eternity*. We don’t just have a king who can strike down ten thousand of our *earthly* foes, but One who is the death of *death*, our foe. He lives and reigns to all eternity, and we, as His people, will get to live forever, too.

So, when it comes to Jesus,

Expect more.

Don’t settle for a small Savior. Expect One who is David’s son, yet David’s Lord, able to save your soul from death. Expect One who has kept the Law *for* you, that His strength might be sufficient for you. Expect One who came not to *be* served, but *to* serve and to give His life as a ransom for many, that He might *give* you the victory. Expect more, because that’s what you have: a *great* Savior, who loves you, and feeds you, and makes you His own, makes you not a son of David, but a child of God.

So. What do you think about the Christ?

In ☩ Jesus’ name. Amen. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo gloria

Questions for Reflection:

1. Why is Jesus’ question *the* question?
2. How were the Pharisees’ expectations of the Christ too low?
3. How have *your* expectations of Jesus been too low?
4. “With Jesus, you get *more* than expected.” What does this mean?