

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE CHRIST?

Psalm 110:1

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Out of all the verses in the Old Testament, Psalm 110:1 is the most frequently quoted in the New Testament. We heard Jesus quote it in today's Gospel:

The LORD says to my Lord:
 "Sit at My right hand,
until I make Your enemies Your
 footstool."

But why? Why *this* verse? Why did the apostles, and Jesus Himself, see these words as so significant?

Martin Luther commented on this psalm, saying,

The 110th psalm is a prophecy of Christ, that He shall be an eternal king and priest, indeed true God, sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and that He would be glorified and recognized. In the entire Scripture there is nothing like this psalm. It would be right to acknowledge it as the chief confirmation of the Christian faith. For nowhere else is Christ prophesied with such clear, plain words as a priest and an eternal priest.¹

In other words, it answers the question put to the Pharisees by Jesus in today's Gospel: "What do you think about the Christ?" There is no more important question. Earlier in Matthew, Jesus had asked His disciples the same thing: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptizer, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." There was apparently some confusion concerning Jesus' identity. King Herod, we read in the Gospel of Mark (6:14-16), was convinced that Jesus was John raised from the dead on account of the works that were being done in His name. The prophet Malachi had announced the return of Elijah before the great and awesome day of the LORD came (Malachi 4:5). And while Jesus certainly performed miracles and spoke the truth of God's Word, turning hearts like few before Him ever had, none of these identifications was correct.

That same confusion exists to this day. Some say Jesus was just a man, a good teacher, perhaps, but nothing more, others say He was merely a figment of the early church's imagination, a myth propagated by power-hungry disciples. Peter, of course,

¹ *Reading the Psalms with Luther* (CPH: 2007), p. 268.

famously confessed the truth, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). The Pharisees refused to answer at all.

But sooner or later you *have* to, because, as we'll be memorizing in the school this week, "There is salvation in no one but Jesus Christ." That's a paraphrase of Acts 4:12. The full verse reads, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." What you think about the Christ has eternal implications. Not only is it the most important question there is, in the end it's the *only* question.

So Jesus, having put up with several ridiculous questions from the Pharisees, by which they meant only to entangle Him in His words (Matthew 22:15), cuts to the heart of the matter, asking, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He?" Knowing that the Messiah would be David's son, as foretold in 2 Samuel (7:12-16), they answer, "The Son of David." Jesus says to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls Him Lord, saying,

The LORD says to my Lord:
 "Sit at My right hand,
 until I make Your enemies Your
 footstool"?

Indeed, these words were written by David, hence their profound mystery. As Jesus says, "If then David calls Him Lord, how is He his Son?" Good question. The Lord we know. He introduced Himself to Moses from the burning bush as "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14), a.k.a. Yahweh. But who's the *other* Lord? The one David refers to as "my Lord"? How can David's son be his Lord? How can he sit at God's right hand, the seat of all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18)? The Pharisees were stumped.

But we know: because David's son *is* Yahweh, both completely human *and* one hundred percent divine. Or, as we read elsewhere in Scripture, Christ is both "the root and the descendant of David" (Revelation 22:16), "descended from David according to the flesh, and...declared to be the Son of God in power...by His resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:3, 4). The Christ is no mere mortal, but God Himself in the flesh.

And this is really good news for us. For truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life (Psalm 49:7). A sinner cannot even save himself, let alone anyone else, much less the whole human race. It takes the shedding of holy, precious blood, and the suffering and death of one who is innocent to satisfy the debt of sin. It takes the Son of God Himself, numbered with sinners, yet spotless and pure,

giving Himself into death that we might not die eternally. It takes a Good Shepherd, who not only lays down His life for the sheep but takes it up again. The fact that they killed Jesus but He did not *stay* dead is proof that Jesus is the Christ. They just didn't want to admit it.

But whether you admit it or not, Jesus is Lord, because after the resurrection, the Lord said to David's Lord, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool." The New Testament teaches that this invitation was fulfilled when Jesus ascended into heaven and sat down. The author of Hebrews says that "After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs" (1:3). He's there now, seated on David's throne, ruling in the midst of His enemies (Psalm 110:2). "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain," concludes Peter at the end of his Pentecost sermon, in which he quotes Psalm 110, "that God has made Him both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36), this Jesus who was crucified.

We have a Lord, and that's a good thing. Thinking what we think about the Christ, thanks to the Father in heaven who has revealed it to us, we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are not His enemies anymore. We've been reconciled. He calls us "friend."

And what a comfort that is, because *we* have enemies. We have sin, which attacks us from within, luring and enticing us by our own desires. And not just the obvious ones, like lust or greed, but also those we don't talk about as much, like despondency, or hopelessness. A few weeks ago we heard the apostle Paul encourage the Christians of Galatia not to grow weary of doing good (Galatians 6:9). Why would anyone do that? Because we often don't see the fruit of our labors. We work hard, pouring ourselves into others, preaching and teaching, raising our kids, trying to be a good neighbor or friend, but it rarely seems to make a difference. Our best efforts go unrewarded. And that's hard to keep up after a while. We are called to be patient and to hope, trusting in the Lord our God. But we are distrusting creatures, who just want control. And when we realize we don't have it, we think, "What's the point?"

Meanwhile, the devil attacks from without. He is a liar and the father of lies, whispering in your ear that it doesn't matter what you think about the Christ. In fact, forget about Him. Not important. You can be your *own* lord. You can love what you want to love, do what you want to do, so long as it's got nothing to do with glorifying God's Son. And yeah, maybe that sounds silly *now*, but you have to admit, there are days...

And don't forget the devil has an ally. He enlists the world in his quest for souls, stoking confusion right where we live. When the governor of California can put up pro-abortion billboards quoting the second greatest commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," when an increasing number of young people are identifying as LGBTQ, when so much of our time is spent worshipping at the little glowing altar in our pocket, that's when you know we're at war. This world is not your friend. "For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world" (1 John 2:16). And the world is fallen.

We have enemies, it's true. We are surrounded on every side, much like Jesus was by His opposition. But *what do you think about the Christ?* Who's son is He? If He is God's Son, then we have nothing to fear, because He reigns, and those enemies will soon be under His feet. The devil is dying. He has lost, and he knows it. The guilt of sin is taken away, and soon the former things will no longer be remembered. This world will pass away, and in its place a new heaven and a new earth, in which we will serve our Lord Jesus Christ in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

And so, we press on. We cling to the trustworthy Word as taught, knowing that we will reap, if we do not give up. For God is on our side, who said to our Lord, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool." This is who Jesus is. This is why it's significant. And so, with Luther we pray:

Praise and honor belong to You, everlasting Son, because You were made flesh and sacrificed Yourself upon the cross as the offering for sin. Govern us according to Your wisdom; defend us against our enemies; speak for us with Your Father, and let us live under You in Your kingdom forever.²

In ☩ Jesus' name. Amen.

² *Reading the Psalms with Luther* (CPH: 2007), p. 269.