

Sermon for October 5th, 2025
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

1 Kings 17:17-24

17 After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. **18** And she said to Elijah, “What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!” **19** And he said to her, “Give me your son.” And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. **20** And he cried to the LORD, “O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?” **21** Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, “O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again.” **22** And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. **23** And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, “See, your son lives.” **24** And the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.”

Psalms 30

1 I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.
2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.
3 O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.
4 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.
5 For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.
6 As for me, I said in my prosperity,
“I shall never be moved.”
7 By your favor, O LORD,
you made my mountain stand strong;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.
8 To you, O LORD, I cry,
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:
9 “What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?”

10 Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!
O LORD, be my helper!"

11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
you have loosed my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness,

12 that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Luke 7:11-17

11 Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. 12 As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. 13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." 14 Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." 15 And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. 16 Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" 17 And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

Our text for meditation this Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity is on our Epistle reading.

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

Introduction

Over the past twenty years or so, strength training and athletics have become far more mainstream than it once was. More men have been seeking to attain athletic capability and better-looking physiques than ever before. Barbells, kettlebells, calisthenics, martial arts, climbing, running, swimming, hiking, all of these and more have reached a zenith of popularity. Along with it comes popular supplements: protein powders, nutrition bars, "pre-workout" shakes, vitamin candies. Along with those comes the instructionals: classes, workout plans, books, online articles, motivational videos, and announcements for competitions. Whereas fitness was once a special interest among very few, it is now a world-spanning industry that circulates hundreds of billions of dollars every year.

On the one hand this is fantastic. Despite all the articles bemoaning obesity rates all over the world, It is safe to say that there are more healthy people than ever before. This is a *good* thing, because to be in shape means being able to love your neighbor more readily when they need help moving furniture, being carried to the hospital, getting protection from threats, or even carrying groceries. A

young man helping his grandmother, a mother playing with her children, and so many more things that exercise enables means that we can better glorify God by serving others in our vocations.

But there is a great price to be paid with this trend of physical culture. Now things are getting *competitive*, to the point where looking a certain way or hitting certain numbers is surpassing any previous emphasis on being healthy. Sinful vanity abounds, with multitudes of people sacrificing their old age in service of their youth. A rising number of young men doing steroids to feel more confident about their bodies (one study showed that *half* the gymgoers are using in Iran alone).¹ There are too many young women trying to maximize their looks with lip fillers and surgery instead of diet and exercise. Sinful greed and deception gets mixed in, with businesses touting various dubious claims regarding what works and what doesn't. Sinful pride and fits of wrath have crept in, as drama between competing influencers leads to all sorts of time-wasting arguments and sometimes violence. When St. Paul says that bodily exercise is of "some" or limited value,² I believe he had these potential pitfalls in mind; while it is good to exercise, we must be careful to not fall into such traps ourselves.

Christian Strength

But did you know that there is a kind of strength which does not have any of this sin problem attached to it? And it is so important that the Apostle St. Paul says that he prays on his knees that the Ephesian congregation would all have it. It is a strength which is so important that a Christian cannot go without it, and with it the Church conquers much of the world.

It is a kind of spiritual strengthening, one which can only be described in terms of growth. A human being is born weak, being unable to stand, walk or eat by itself. But over time that infant grows in a strength that requires little to no training; he becomes able to support himself on all fours, then he can crawl, then he can stand, then he can walk. Teeth begin to grow at the same time as a kind of curious hunger that draws him away from his mother's breast and toward other kinds of foods. His mind grows as he takes in the sights, sounds, tastes, smells and feels around him. Before you know it, what was once a powerless infant is now a young man who possesses great capabilities, able to navigate the challenges of the world.

So it is with Christian strength. When we are Baptized we are born anew, and spiritually we are weak. We can only just barely cooperate with the Holy Spirit's guidance, and just barely listen to the Word. But by the Grace of God, over time we grow into our faith. Christ dwells in our hearts and minds and we hear Him more easily. We find ourselves caring about others for their own sake, seeking nothing in return as we have a new foundation in Christian love. We find ourselves able to make right decisions and to remember good doctrine, not because we have a bunch of dogmatic information in our heads, but because our souls are made capable the same way a young man is made capable by a lifetime of being raised by his father.

Free Strength

This strength is only granted by God Almighty. You cannot get it by fasting. You cannot get it by refusing sleep, engaging in night vigils, following the seven hours, going to Church four times a week, or anything of the sort. Any man could inject some anabolic steroids and increase the size of his muscles or put extra weight on a barbell;³ *Christian* strength, on the other hand, cannot be obtained by *your* effort. It is a function of Grace alone.

Thankfully, God is abundantly *giving* by nature. He is our Heavenly Father, not our Heavenly *miser*: He shall not refuse you if you ask. Those who earnestly wait on Him shall receive this strengthening which makes all things possible. St. Paul's prayer is answered whenever a Christian gladly hears the Word, whenever he spends time with God in prayer and receives what God offers by

1 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10938795/>

2 1 Timothy 4:8

3 For anyone reading this, please do not do this – performance enhancing drugs will destroy your health.

faith. When believers are *sanctified*, they are made stronger in the love of Christ and the knowledge of God. To receive this gift, all you have to do is open your heart to God and patiently wait for His provision.

It is this strength that gave the martyrs the ability to stand firm in the face of pagan threats. In 2015, when twenty-one Christian men were told by islamic militants that they would die if they did not recant their faith, this very strength from God kept them firm in their confession that Jesus is the Christ. The knives went to their throats, but they did not submit to primal human fear, and now they are in Heaven with our Lord.⁴ On the flip side, it is this spiritual strength that gave the Christian armies under Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain the bravery they needed to reconquer their homelands away from the wicked caliphate that held it for centuries.

It is this very same empowering, which only comes from God, which comes to you beloved. With it you can conquer lands, love your enemies, cast out demons, save the poor, help those in need and danger alike. Being rooted in love and given power by the Spirit you can wage war against your own sin while lifting others up to your level. God shall use this to preserve your soul should you ever come under the threat of a pagan knife to your throat, but He also gives us the grace to make it through the crushing grind of modernity with its daily battle for holiness. It is this enabling which we must covet, and by His love for us He offers it freely. Shall you believe and be made greater than you are?

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

4 For a recounting of this incident, watch this: <https://youtu.be/XwPQqkeeCTg>

Sermon for October 12th, 2025
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

Proverbs 25:6-14

- 6** Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence
or stand in the place of the great,
7 for it is better to be told, "Come up here,"
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.
What your eyes have seen
8 do not hastily bring into court,
for what will you do in the end,
when your neighbor puts you to shame?
9 Argue your case with your neighbor himself,
and do not reveal another's secret,
10 lest he who hears you bring shame upon you,
and your ill repute have no end.
11 A word fitly spoken
is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.
12 Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold
is a wise reprover to a listening ear.
13 Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest
is a faithful messenger to those who send him;
he refreshes the soul of his masters.
14 Like clouds and wind without rain
is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give.

Psalms 2

- 1** Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."
4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
7 I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you."
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.

9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Ephesians 4:1-6

1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Luke 14:1-11

1 One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. **2** And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. **3** And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” **4** But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. **5** And he said to them, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” **6** And they could not reply to these things.

7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, **8** “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, **9** and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. **10** But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. **11** For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Our text for meditation this Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity is on our Old Testament reading.

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

Introduction

Our Old Testament reading comes from the book of Proverbs, and at first blush it seems like a disjointed pile of advice. What's going on here? What's the point of this sort of passage? To put it simply, king Solomon wrote the Proverbs as a means of imparting wisdom to all who would read and put his exhortations into practice. What is wisdom? It is the skill for living well, and behaving in such a way that things go well for you. We all want to live the good life, right? We want to be well-off financially, healthy, suffering as little as possible, and having as little conflict as possible. We all want to live with few problems and many blessings. But in order to have that, we must have wisdom. Living the good life means making good choices, speaking good words, building up good habits, thinking good thoughts – are you noticing a pattern here?

Good is the operative word here. Not only good in the sense of shrewdness or cleverness, but good in the *moral* sense as well. Solomon ties wisdom to keeping God's Commandments from a heart that is devoted to His ways. For this reason, he writes to us that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy one is insight.”¹ To fear God and follow in His ways is the first step in health, wealth and happiness, to live the good life one must first seek to be a good and Godly person. Now, lest I be accused of advocating for a “theology of glory,” wisdom is found in doing the right thing even if we are having a hard time in life, even if it does not seem to pay off, even if we are persecuted. But generally speaking, this obedience *does* have visible rewards now and in the future.

So what does this all have to do with our reading? Much in every way. You see my friends, whenever Solomon writes a proverb, he writes with the intention that we would connect it with the Commandments of our Lord in mind, especially the Second Greatest Commandment. God commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves.² How do we love our neighbors? By caring about them the same way we care about our own well-being. But in order to do that, we must love ourselves. How do we do that? Ah, there is a secret of wisdom that I am happy to reveal to you: in order to love yourself, you must show love to your neighbor by obedience to God's commands.

The Eighth Commandment and Wisdom

Our Old Testament reading is a fantastic example of this dynamic. Following Solomon's admonitions will not only be pleasing to God, it will also teach us wisdom regarding the Eighth Commandment and help us live better lives. The Eighth Commandment is *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*. And what does this mean? Dr Luther says in the Small Catechism,

*We should fear and love God, and so we should not tell lies about our neighbor, nor betray, slander, or defame him, but should apologize for him, speak well of him, and interpret charitably all that he does.*³

When Solomon writes that we must not run off to court quickly, he has the Eighth Commandment in mind. His hypothetical scenario is that we have seen what *looks* like some misbehavior that our neighbor has done. If we sinfully desire to ruin our neighbor's reputation, we will hurry to drag him to court or “cancel” him on social media. But what will that win us? Solomon says it will lead to our own ruin. We shall not get away with it; either in the court or in public air, our neighbor will be vindicated against our slander. If that does not happen, then we should fear all the more, because it may be that our neighbor cries out to God over all this, and God Himself will see to it that we are punished for our slander. So you see my friends, not only are there *consequences* for failing to heed this warning, it is also beneficial to our own lives that we follow Solomon's commentary here. If I do not run off to the judge trying to ruin my neighbor, then my reputation is protected.

This is also true in the beginning of the passage. Solomon adjures us to take a lower place before a king. This too is in obedience to the Eighth Commandment! If you intentionally choose a place of lower honor before someone in authority, then you are speaking well of all those men who must have more honor as they take their places. You are, as Luther puts it, interpreting their reputation and deeds charitably with my humility. This humility and obedience brings about many blessings for those who do it. If they are in the proper place, then they are protected from embarrassment; but if they are sitting in too low of a position, then they are given honor by God and the one in authority!

If you are honest and tactful, then Solomon praises that as well, saying that your fitly spoken and faithful words adorn your reputation. Maintain tact, and even if you have to rebuke someone they will be thankful. Think of it my friends! Just by obeying this commandment and caring more about your neighbor's reputation and honor than yourself, being truthful but respectful, people will like you more and treat you well. In loving your neighbor *by* obeying this command, you love yourself through

1 Proverbs 9:10

2 Mark 12:28-31

3 <https://bookofconcord.org/small-catechism/ten-commandments/>

your neighbor and receive great blessings!

The Benefits of Obedience

This is the exquisite secret that permeates the Book of Proverbs, repeated over and over again. Such is the way that God has ordered things, that obedience to His Commandments for the sake of our neighbors results in our neighbors treating us well and in our own immunity from various disasters. A key part of living well, living the *good* life, is living for others and being good to them.

If you have any doubts, remember that we are called to live by the example of our Lord Jesus. No one else has loved anyone as much as Jesus Christ loves us, no one has done anything for anyone else as much as Jesus has done for us; He healed, He taught, He comforted, He labored, and above all He paid the ultimate price for the sake of our salvation. And no one is as blessed as our Lord Jesus, who has been elevated above and beyond any man in terms of reputation, authority, power, and adoration. The more we emulate Him and practice benevolence to all men, the more we receive blessing from on high in the same way. Certainly, that means we suffer and are persecuted, but that does not preclude nor exclude being blessed in and through that, until we find ourselves with the ultimate blessing of eternal life at the Resurrection. Let us then walk in wisdom by walking in Agape love for one another.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Sermon for October 19th, 2025
EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

Deuteronomy 10:12-21

12 “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, **13** and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good? **14** Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. **15** Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. **16** Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. **17** For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. **18** He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. **19** Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. **20** You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. **21** He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. **22** Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

Psalms 34:8-22

8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!
9 Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints,
for those who fear him have no lack!
10 The young lions suffer want and hunger;
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
11 Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 What man is there who desires life
and loves many days, that he may see good?
13 Keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking deceit.
14 Turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.
15 The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous
and his ears toward their cry.
16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
to cut off the memory of them from the earth.
17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears
and delivers them out of all their troubles.
18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.
19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

20 He keeps all his bones;
not one of them is broken.

21 Affliction will slay the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

22 The LORD redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

1 Corinthians 1:4-9

4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— 6 even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Matthew 22:41-46

41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, 42 saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” 43 He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

44 “‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet’”?

45 If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” 46 And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Our text for meditation this Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity is on our Gospel reading.

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

Introduction

There is a question out there that everyone must answer. It is the single most important question there is, and it is on the most important *topic* there is. It is also a question that few people can answer adequately, even among the most learned scholars. Almost everyone will answer this question incorrectly, and the result of this will be the vast majority of humanity being burned forever in the furnace of hell. And it is not because people don't *know* the answer to this question, but rather because they do not *like* the answer.

That question is, “Who is Jesus?”

Bad Answers from Nonbelievers

Nonbelievers do not want to answer this question correctly, so they will say all sorts of insane things. Some, typically secularists, will claim that Jesus is nothing more than some moral teacher, ignoring what He said about Himself. Some moral teacher, some *philosopher* does not predicate all of their teachings on who they are, but Jesus does. He does not say “follow my teachings because they are the correct things to do,” but instead He says “follow my teachings because I am the Son of God.” His

exhortations are not mere advice or counsel, but *Divine Commandments*.

Other nonbelievers, like buddhists or hindus, will claim that Jesus is one god among many. Muslims try to demote Jesus to the status of prophet. But these positions betray His own words, for He Himself says that there is *only one God*,¹ and He is that very God. He says to us all, “I and the Father are one,” and “unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”² Jesus is the second Person of the Trinity, so anyone trying to answer that He is anything *less* than God is in a position of deadly error.

Worse yet are the nonbelievers who respond with hostility or antipathy. The modern take coming from non-Christians on the “dissident right” is that Jesus is just some jewish rabbi peddling jewish religion to Gentiles in order make them more jewish. Meanwhile, jewish documents like the “Toledot Yeshu” or the talmud claim that Jesus was just some evil sorcerer. There are also angry “new atheists” that have written books attacking the morality of Christ's teachings, with their arguments predictably boiling down to complaining that Jesus is not tolerant enough for their liking. Of course, there are also plenty of nonbelievers who simply claim that He never existed.

Finally, there are the cultists who want you to think they are Christians, but ultimately have answers similar to the other nonbelievers out there. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus is just some powerful angel. Mormons believe Jesus is a powerful polygamous space alien and brother to satan. The Christian Science cult claims that Jesus was a man who “best embodied” the “Christ principle” that seeps out of their omnipresent gas-like deity. Unlike the people who hate Jesus openly, these groups seek to use Him as a mascot for whatever subversive, ugly teachings they have. And like the secularist, like the buddhist, like the hindu, like the muslim, like the atheist, and like the jew, they are all hellbound so long as they answer this question incorrectly.

Bad Answers from Believers

Let us not think though that only non-Christians are answering the question “who is Jesus” poorly. You hear quite a few believers saying things *about* Jesus that are true, things that we must confess if we are to be Christians in the first place, but not much in the way of Who He is. Yes, it is true that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God just as St. Peter confesses,³ but there are plenty of satanists, people who *hate* Jesus, that would agree with you, but they are not saved. Perhaps you emphasize that Jesus is Divine – good! But so do many of the judaizers and other heretics, people that Scripture calls *cursed* on account of having a different Gospel than what the Scripture gives us.⁴

This is one of the points that Christ is making in our reading for today. Jesus asks the Pharisees about the Christ and whose Son He is. The Pharisees are *correct* when they say that the Messiah would hail from the line of David, making Him the “Son of David” as a result – a royal title for the coming King of all Israel.⁵ This is certainly true. But they missed what David himself said about the coming Messiah: if they read the very Psalm Jesus quotes from, they would recognize that the Messiah would also be David's Lord, that He would be immortal, that He was pre-existent and that He belongs to the endless order of Melchizedek.⁶ Because of these things, King David bowed down and worshiped Christ, *calling Him Lord*. In other words, by asking these questions He confronts the pharisees with their staunch refusal to believe *in* the very Christ who stood before them.

1 Mark 12:29

2 John 10:30, 8:24

3 Matthew 16:16

4 Galatians 1:8

5 Isaiah 11 demonstrates that the Christ would come from the “stump of Jesse.”

6 Psalm 110

The Answer God is Looking For

And that is the answer God is looking for. It is not an answer made with our intellect so much as it is an answer with the heart, with our *faith*. If you are asked the question, “who is Jesus?” the answer should *always* be, from the heart, “He is my Lord and my Savior.” From the bottom of your heart you must understand that He did not *just* die for sins and rise again from the dead; Jesus died for *your* sins, He rose from the dead *for you*. He is fully Divine and fully human, absolutely, but Jesus sees you, cares about you, and earnestly desires for you to trust in and worship Him. To not merely say “Jesus is King,” but “Jesus is *my* King.”

The reason so many people get this answer *wrong* is not because they have the wrong information. Someone can know and affirm everything there is to know *about* Jesus Christ but still get that question wrong, because they refuse to say “Jesus is *my* Christ, *my* Lord, *my* Savior.” Our Lord confronts the pharisees about their refusal to understand that David *called Him Lord* – not just in recognition of His Divinity, but in actually adoring and worshiping Him. The vast majority of humanity, no matter what they say they believe about Jesus, simply does not want this to be the case. But let us, like David the man after God's heart, recognize from our innermost parts that who Jesus is matters to us, applies to us, and brings us all salvation and the glory of the world to come. For that, at the end of the day, is the thing that matters the most.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Sermon for October 26th, 2025
REFORMATION SUNDAY

READINGS

Revelation 14:6-13

6 Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. **7** And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

8 Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality." **9** And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, **10** he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. **11** And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

Psalms 46

- 1** God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
- 2** Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
3 though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah*
- 4** There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
- 5** God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
- 6** The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
- 7** The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*
- 8** Come, behold the works of the LORD,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.
- 9** He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the chariots with fire.
- 10** "Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!"
- 11** The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

Romans 3:19-28

19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. **20** For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. **21** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— **22** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. **26** It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. **27** Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. **28** For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Matthew 11:11-19

11 “Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. **12** From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. **13** For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, **14** and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. **15** He who has ears to hear, let him hear. **16** “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,
17 “‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’” **18** For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ **19** The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”

Our text for meditation this Reformation Sunday is on our Gospel reading.

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

Introduction

I had a conversation with a Roman Catholic man a few years back, and the discussion turned to religion. Naturally that turned into a friendly debate between our denominations. Now whenever you have a debate between Lutheranism and papism, the entire discussion will hinge on authority over matters of truth. As Lutherans, we confess *Sola Scriptura*, that the sole source of all dogma and morals is the Bible; any doctrine which *adds* to it or *takes away* from it is at best non-binding, but in most cases it is false. We accept nothing as doctrine which does not come from Scripture. The papist disagrees of course, believing that his church – and especially his pope – are so guided by the Holy Spirit that they can create or define new doctrines at will and be guaranteed that it is true.

So over the course of our discussion, the catholic brought up an interesting argument. “You believe in *Sola Scriptura*? Fine. Show me, where are Protestants in the Bible?” Now that sounds kind of funny, but he meant it seriously and it was a good question. You see, he could point to an established Church, but he did not know where there was anyone protesting that Church that God accepted. He has a point, if we are thinking about specific organizations. There are no groups *calling* themselves Protestants in Scripture, but to his dismay I was able to show them exactly where the Protestants were, and I started with our Gospel reading for today.

John the Baptist, Protestant

Our Savior begins by saying that no one has arisen that is greater than John the Baptist – except Jesus Himself. When He says “the one who is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he,” what Christ means by that is that though He is Divine, Christ made Himself the lowest of men and most humble so that He could accomplish the plan of salvation. But aside from Jesus, John the Baptist was greater than anyone living. Why is this the case?

In his day, John the Baptist contested the ruling religious authorities who had become corrupt, the church of his times. This was not because they had no authority, but because the entirety of the institution needed reform. He corrected their theology, and stood at the bank of the Jordan to call *everyone* to repentance. He condemned the pharisee and the sadducee alike as vipers, and warned against their belief that Abrahamic lineage guaranteed salvation or prosperity.¹ He warned that the wrath of God was something to *flee*, not something from which we could earn clemency with our merit or heritage. He called everyone to be baptized with a baptism of repentance, instructing everyone to amend their ways in preparation for the Deliverer; St. Luke also records that he preached *Gospel* to them.²

These are all things define the Protestant. We do our best to witness to everyone both inside and outside the Church, directing them to true doctrine and correcting the places that the Church has erred. We advocate for both religious and societal reforms, and we *do not care* if some old dusty institution says we cannot do it, for we are called to loyalty to God over any established church. John the Baptist was not part of the organized religious structure of his day. He was not ordained through the “proper organizational procedures,” did not launch his protest through the “proper channels,” did not bow the knee to the high priest, and did not follow the extrabiblical rules that the pharisees cooked up. All that he proclaimed was the Word of God Almighty, and the only thing he cared about was showing God's love to the people by exhorting them to *faith*.

Elijah the Prophet, Protestant

Our Lord Jesus tells the crowd that “the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.” The Church of their day, the ruling religious authorities, had the backing of the Roman Empire with all of their military might; priesthoods were bought and sold, and no one could raise their voices about it without risking their lives. To the Empire, religion was not about loyalty to God, but a way to keep the people quiet; the jewish authorities were more than happy to collude with them to make this a reality. And what does God do when the Church starts serving the state and saying what the state wants and following after state morality? Well, He sends a Protestant.

It is not just John the Baptist who is a Biblical Protestant, but Elijah as well. Christ says that John is “Elijah who is to come.” Not that the two are the same *person*, but they have the same *spirit*, the same *purpose*, and similar enough circumstances that such a Protestant figure was necessary. Elijah was tasked with bringing the Northern Israelites to repentance after they had begun to worship the false god baal.³ The Kingdom of God was placed under the pagan rulership of Jezebel and her thug prophets, and all the *true* servants of God were either martyred or sent off into hiding. Like John the Baptist, Elijah was not part of the prevailing religious institutions of his day; he had no part in the golden calves of Samaria, and he accepted none of their false teachings that blended pagan doctrines with what the Bible teaches. He did not – *shocker of shockers* – go to seminary either. But he stood up, proclaimed the Word, demanded an end to the corruptions and abuses of his day and exhorted all people to live according to God's ways.

Elijah represents *all* of the prophets here, by the way. Almost universally the prophets of old did

1 Matthew 3:7-10

2 Luke 3:3-18

3 1 Kings 17-18

exactly what Elijah and John the Baptist did; protest an erring Church that had been taken over by force, exhort people to repentance, engage in independent worship, and preach the Gospel. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, Hosea, and more, all of these men preached the Solas and went up against the establishment, becoming a different sort of spiritual leader than most men are used to. *Whenever it gets this bad, God sends a Protestant.*

The Response of the People

We have seen this play out many times in Church history. Athanasius fought against the mass acceptance of the Arian heresy, William of Ockham protested the opulent luxuries of Rome, and no one could forget Luther's efforts to bring about reform in the Church. Each time this happens though, they are met with the same dynamic that our Savior complains about in the midst of His message. Yes, some people followed the Lord at the encouragement of John the Baptist; so too did a good number of people listen to Athanasius, William, and Luther. But by and large the masses of people out there resist the idea that something could be wrong in the first place.

“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.” In other words, the people were *uncomfortable*, because John the Baptist did not act the way *they* wanted him to. He stubbornly refused to conform to their go-along-to-get-along way of living, calling them to conform to the message *he* was preaching instead. John would not play their games, so they refused to repent; instead they simply concluded that he had a demon. Then Christ Himself comes along. Jesus is humble enough to reach tax collectors, prostitutes, bums and criminals with a message of repentance and faith, and this makes the crowd more worried. John was too strict, but Jesus wasn't strict enough for them! Neither would follow the established culture, so the people were perplexed and would not listen.

Our Lord ends the passage by saying “wisdom is justified by her deeds.” This is to say, the wise man listens to and follows the one God has sent. The wisest men and women in Judea heard John the Baptist's message, got baptized, and changed their lives for the better. When he was taken into custody by Herod, the wisest people in Judea listened to Jesus and followed *His* ways. It is not wisdom to go with the crowd during times of corruption, beloved. It is wisdom to follow after God.

As it Stands Today

As it stands today, the Protestant is more necessary than ever before. Few denominations calling themselves Christian are *actually* Christian. Far too many of them have imbibed worldly doctrines, worldly morality, and worldly priorities. They scream from the rooftops that we have to take in every refugee from every poor place, but never say a word about the fate of their souls. They tell us that “love wins,” when all their kind of love is winning for them is diseases and molested children. The papacy has given up none of her errors but only added more, while many historic Protestant branches have hollowed out their doctrines to make room for things Rome approves of – mass universal tolerance of absolutely everything, ecumenism, the dissolution of borders, and robbing the Godly to pay the godless. The conditions of the Church are so decrepit and corrupt that we have had to establish this present Catacomb Synod just so that people could keep receiving Word and Sacrament.

The good news is, we stand in good company when we struggle against this corruption. If you are here amid the Catacomb Synod, you belong to the great heritage of believers who *don't* go along to get along. You belong in the company of Elijah and the John the Baptist, men who foresaw the coming Christ and *followed* where He led them instead of saying “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance.” Elijah won though. John won. And so too shall we, with patience and steadfastness, see victory through the movements and actions of our Lord Jesus.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.