

XVIII TRINITY 2019

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

1 COR. 1.4 ST. MATTHEW 22.34



When it comes to the frequent encounters Jesus has with the religious experts and teachers of the day...he always has the last word!

In today's Gospel...Jesus has just had a discussion with the Sadducees...one of the two major political parties within Judaism Jesus frequently encounters...the other being the Pharisees.

The Sadducees and the Pharisees disagreed on many things...most significantly was the belief in the existence of the soul and life after death. The Sadducees didn't believe there was an afterlife...the Pharisees did...specifically in the resurrection of the body. Saint Paul...who identifies himself as a Pharisee...used this to his advantage during his missionary journeys.

The Sadducees had tried to trick Jesus with a question about marriage in heaven. It was a ridiculous question considering they didn't believe in heaven. Jesus told them they didn't know their own faith; and they didn't know God's power. If they did, they would know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of the living, not the dead...and there is no marriage in heaven. Jesus had the last word!

The Pharisees seized on the opportunity to set a trap of their own...or so they thought. They really weren't interested in what Jesus had to say...they just wanted to trick him into saying something they could use against him. So they asked him which of the Ten Commandments was the greatest. That was also a ridiculous question...since all of the Commandments carry equal weight in God's eyes.

Jesus tells them all of the Ten Commandments and the teachings of the prophets are summarized in The Great Commandment to love God above everything else and love others in the same way we want to be loved. We hear the Summary of the Law at every Mass because it was Jesus' last word to the Pharisees and it is his last word to us about God's love and how we are to apply it in our lives!

Jesus now turns the tables on the Pharisees with a question of his own: What did they think about the Messiah and whose descendant he would be. The Pharisees correctly answered he would be a descendant of King David.

Jesus then asked a more difficult question: If David called his own descendant "Lord", how can the Messiah really be his descendant?" The Pharisees couldn't give Jesus an answer and no one asked him any more questions. Once again Jesus had the last word!

In Jesus' time "Lord" was a title of respect and would have been used by a young person when addressing his father, uncle or an elder. It would never have occurred to a father to call his son or another young person "Lord". When I was a young boy I rarely addressed my father as "Sir". When I was older he sometimes called me "Sir"...maybe he was telling me I was all grown up.

Jesus quotes Psalm 110 to make the point the Pharisees really didn't understand a basic truth about their own religion. Otherwise they would have understood why "the Lord" would say to "my Lord" to take the place of honor at his right side. "The Lord" is God the Father. He calls the Messiah "my Lord". God the Father tells the Messiah to take the place of honor reserved for him at his right side.

King David was great; the Messiah is greater. The only way God the Father would say to the Messiah to come and sit down at his right side, in the place that was rightfully his, the only way King David could call his own descendant, Jesus, his "Lord", is if the Father and Jesus are one and the same. Jesus said, "Before Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I AM."

We call Jesus our Lord and King. He is Lord over and above King David and all of his other descendants. He is Lord of the entire Universe. He is Lord over all earthly kings, presidents, and prime ministers. He is Lord over all bishops, priests and deacons. He is Lord over all of us.

Jesus just doesn't have the last word...he IS the last WORD! And we gladly proclaim him to be the same.

