

XVIII Trinity 2020
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney

I Cor. 1.4-8 St. Matthew 22.34-46



Jesus has the last word... might be a good title for today's Gospel. The Pharisees heard Jesus had silenced the Sadducees who had tried to trick him. The Pharisees now seized on the opportunity to try to trick Jesus themselves. But just who are the Pharisees and the Sadducees?

The Pharisees and the Sadducees were the two major political groups within Judaism. The Sadducees were the more socially and economically connected. The two groups disagreed on many political and theological matters. What they disagreed on most was life after death...Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the body...Sadducees rejected the idea of an afterlife altogether.

Both groups tried repeatedly to get Jesus to make inadmissible answers to difficult political and theological questions. Jesus knows what they are up to and turns the tables by asking questions of his own...which they can never answer. Jesus has the last word.

Just before the action in today's Gospel, the Sadducees tried to trap Jesus with a question about marriage in heaven, which they don't believe in. Jesus answers they have it all wrong and don't know their own Scriptures or God's power. Human beings will be like angels (**not become angels**) when they get to heaven and there will be no need for marriage. Jesus then reminded them God said he is the God of the living, not of the dead.

This leads us back to today's Gospel, which takes place the week before Jesus died on the Cross. Jesus' encounters with the Pharisees had become more hostile and Jesus knew where this would all lead.

The Pharisees hated Jesus and were looking for any way they could get him killed. They ask him what is the greatest commandment. Jesus answers the Great Commandment is to love God with our whole being. The second most important commandment is to love our neighbor as we want to be loved. We hear these words at the beginning of every Mass in the Summary of the Law.

Jesus goes on to say the whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depends on these two commandments.

Jesus then asks the Pharisees to tell him what they thought about the Messiah (Christ in the KJV). Messiah comes from the Hebrew and Christ comes from the Greek...both are equivalent titles meaning, "anointed one" or "oily headed one". Like King David, Jesus had oil poured on him as a sign he was God's anointed one.

The Pharisees told Jesus the Messiah is King David's descendant. Jesus isn't going to let the Pharisees off that easily. He asks them if that's the case, why did God's Spirit inspire David to call him "Lord"? A father or uncle or older relative would never refer to a son or nephew or younger relative as "Lord". So what does all this mean?

In Psalm 100 we read: *"The Lord (God) said to my Lord (Jesus); sit here at my right side until I put your enemies under your feet."* Jesus has the place of honor sitting to the right of Abba...Papa...Daddy God. And he is the Second Person of the Trinity. That gives him the right to be called "Lord"...and he is David's descendant.

Jesus has now put the Pharisees to silence. They knew better than to ask him any more questions. They would only make themselves look and sound ridiculous. Jesus, again, has the last word.

Jesus tells us not everyone who calls him "Lord, Lord" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven...only those who do what God asks them to do. Today we can make a commitment to follow Jesus as Lord, as King, and as God. He offers us hope for life everlasting, and we believe in a God of the living, not of the dead.

Saint Paul tells us in the Epistle we are richly blessed in our union with Jesus. What we know to be true about Jesus will keep us strong and faithful until the Day Jesus returns. Paul asks us to trust God, who has called us into the most perfect fellowship with his Son, Jesus.

Jesus has the last word! What will be our **FIRST** words when he returns and we see him face-to-face?

