

## **XVIII TRINITY 2021**

**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**

**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**

***1 COR. 1.4-9 ST. MATTHEW 22.34-46***

✠

When it comes to partisan politics of the religious kind...no better example exists in the Bible than the Pharisees and Sadducees. They were the two major political parties within Judaism. They disagreed on many things. What set them apart more than anything was belief in life after death...Pharisees believed in life after death...Sadducees did not.

The action in today's Gospel takes place during the first Holy Week. This is a pivotal moment in the life of Jesus. He knows the people had turned against him and were looking for any way they could silence him. The Pharisees had already decided the only way to do that was to get him executed.

The Gospel begins by telling us the Pharisees heard Jesus had "silenced the Sadducees". The Sadducees had asked Jesus to explain a passage in Deuteronomy instructing a woman whose husband dies to marry his brother. The man had six brothers and the woman outlived them all. Then she too died. Who will she be married to in heaven?

Jesus "silences the Sadducees" by showing them how foolish their question is. There won't be any marriage in heaven because, like the prophet Habakkuk wrote, we will be like angels in heaven. There will be no need for marriage. Jesus also tells them they don't know their own scriptures, because if they did, they would know the God they claim to believe in, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is the God of the living, not the dead.

We will be like angels...we will not become angels...when we get to heaven. There will be no need for marriage. The Church...which is us...those who have been called to be the bridegroom of Christ...will consummate our marriage to Jesus at the Great Wedding Feast in heaven.

The Pharisees were happy to hear Jesus had silenced the Sadducees. They now saw this as their chance to trick Jesus into saying something they could use to get him arrested. They ask him a question about the greatest commandment they think has a no-win answer. Jesus, of course, knows what they are up to.

The Greatest Commandment, Jesus tells them, is to love God with our whole being. The second most important Commandment is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Jesus goes on to say the whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments.

Jesus then asks the Pharisees to tell him what they thought about the Christ. Christ is a title...not a last name...and means "anointed one" or "oily headed one" in Greek. Like King David, Jesus had oil poured on him as a sign he was God's anointed one...he was set apart for the work God had for him.

When a man is ordained a priest, the bishop rubs oil on the man's hands...a sign he is being set apart to do the work of a priest in the Church of God. When a baby is baptized, the priest rubs oil on the child's forehead in the sign of the Cross...a sign he too has been set apart. When a person is confirmed, the bishop also makes the sign of the cross on his forehead and asks God to help him continue the work his sponsors promised for him at his baptism.

The Pharisees told Jesus the Messiah was going to be a descendent of King David. Psalm 110 begins "The Lord said to my Lord; sit here at my right side until I put your enemies under your feet." In Psalm 110, "The Lord" refers to God; "my Lord" refers to the Messiah. The Lord God says to my Lord, the Messiah, take the place of honor and sit down at my right side.

'Lord' is a title of respect a young person would have used when addressing an elder. A father or uncle would not have called his own son or nephew 'Lord'. The only way "The Lord" would say to "my Lord" to take the place of honor; the only way David could call his own descendant his 'Lord', is if 'The Lord' and "my Lord" were one and the same. Jesus says, "Before Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were, I AM!"

In making his claim to Messiahship, Jesus signed his own death warrant. We, too, believe in the God of the living. Jesus' death warrant makes it possible for us to take a seat at the Great Wedding Feast in heaven.

Until then, Jesus asks us to simply trust him...and he will keep us firm until the end of time. And we can't be silenced in spreading this message of hope.

✠