

XVIII Trinity 2022  
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
*St. Matthew 22.34-46*



They were out to trick Jesus! They were hoping to get the last word!

The action in today's Gospel takes place during the final week of the life of Jesus on Earth. He knew the Sadducees and Pharisees had already decided they had to get him killed, or lose their political power. The encounters between Jesus and the Sadducees and Pharisees will only become more heated as the week progresses.

The Gospel tells us the Pharisees heard Jesus had silenced the Sadducees. The Sadducees had tried to trick Jesus with a question about marriage in heaven. It was a trick question because the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead or heaven. They did believe in Sheol...a dark place the souls of the dead went to after the body died.

Jesus told the Sadducees they didn't know their own Scriptures or God's power. If they did, they would understand there was no need of marriage in heaven because we would be like the angels. They should also know God told Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The God they claim to know is the God of the living, not of the dead!

What did Jesus mean by "God of the living"? Deuteronomy refers to God as the "living God." He is not only the God who is alive...all other gods are dead because they do not really exist...he is also the God of the living. God's relationship with us doesn't end when we die. Jesus...God's Son...proved this when he died and once and for all defeated death. Because he died and lives forever with the Father...so will we.

Now it is the Pharisees turn. They did believe in the resurrection of the dead and now tried to trick Jesus with a question of their own. They asked him which of the Ten Commandments was the greatest. Jesus has already shown all the Ten Commandments carry equal weight. He could not have said one Commandment is more important than the other without getting himself into trouble, which is what the Pharisees wanted.

Jesus tells them all of the Commandments and the teachings of the prophets depend on the Greatest Commandment to love God with our whole being; and the Second Greatest Commandment to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Jesus asks the Pharisees to tell him what they thought about the Messiah and whose descendent he was. They answered he would be a descendent of King David. Jesus then said if that was the case...why did the Holy Spirit inspire David to call the Messiah 'Lord'? Jesus quotes Psalm 100..."The Lord said to my Lord; sit here at my right side until I put your enemies under your feet." The frustrated Pharisees couldn't give Jesus an answer and didn't ask him any more questions.

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, not the other way around. A father or an uncle would never have called his son or nephew 'Lord'. Jesus pointed out to the religious experts didn't understand the truth about their own religion. Otherwise they would have understood Psalm 110..."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 over all earthly kings, presidents, and prime ministers. He is Lord over all bishops, priests and deacons. He is our Lord and we gladly claim him for our own.

Our commitment to Jesus as Lord, as King and as God comes with the duty to love God above everything else and love (do what is best) for others. And Jesus will keep us firm until he comes again.

And Jesus always gets the last word!

