

## Pentecost 19 – P25A (10/23/11 – *The Christ Is the LORD in Flesh & Blood*)

In the Name of JESUS. [Amen]

We are faced with two conundra – two puzzling challenges – in our *Holy Gospel* for this day. The one has to do with ***the great commandment in the Law*** [MT 22.36]. The other has to do with the nature of ***the Christ*** [MT 22.42]. The first, the Pharisees put to Jesus – in one last attempt to cause Him to stumble, so that they might publicly find some fault in Him. They attempt to cause Jesus to pit the Word of God against Itself – to place more importance in one part of the Word over against another. The second, Jesus puts to the Pharisees – **not** to trip them up publicly, but to teach them to know aright the only Savior so that they might believe and be saved.

***Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?*** With this question, the Pharisees think that they will – at last – cause this popular Rabbi to falter before the people. Maybe He will lose the respect of the multitudes – and they can be done with Him. Maybe He will speak so wrongly that they will have an excuse to put Him out – even stone Him for blasphemy. That was their constant hope. They were bent on evil. That is the nature of every man’s heart.

But this is an easy question for Him Who gave the Law to Moses in the first place. Hopefully, it is a question that not only our most recent Confirmands but also all of us can answer correctly. God gave the Commandments on two tablets of stone. The first tablet – the first table of the Law – has to do with our relationship toward God. And Jesus summarizes the first table with His Word given in DEUTERONOMY: ***You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*** [DEU 6.5]. Love toward God – this is shown foremost in **faith** toward God. That is ***the great commandment in the Law***. As Martin Luther has taught us in his Catechism, regarding the First Commandment: *We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.*

Then our Lord Jesus is quick to add: ***And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself*** [MT 22.39; LEV 19.18]. ***On these two commandments*** – these two tablets – ***depend all the Law and the Prophets*** [MT 22.40]. Every other commandment – every other command – of God falls into one of these

two categories. And if a person keeps both of these tables perfectly, such a one keeps all of God's Law perfectly. The Law is not that complicated. The Lord has summarized it all into just two commands – love God ... love neighbor. Do this, and you shall live – for *love is the fulfilling of the Law* [ROM 13.10].

**All must be done out of love!** As St. Paul says: *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.* [1COR 13.1-3] Our faith must be working through – and by means of – love [GAL 5.6].

Moreover, it is clear that the Pharisees – and, presumably, the other religious leaders also – had difficulty understanding the Messiah. First, they think of Him as only a mere man – *the Son of David*. And even when Jesus explains to them the Scriptures – that this Son of David is at the same time David's **LORD** and God – they certainly do not understand that the One standing before them is He. After all, when Jesus was in His hometown of Nazareth, back in ch.13 – the *Gospel* appointed for **St. James of Jerusalem, Brother of our Lord and Martyr**, which falls on this date – those closest to Him saw Him as much less than a promised human Son of David. For in that place we have the objections of those who heard Jesus preach in the synagogue: *Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not This the carpenter's Son? Is not His mother called Mary? And are not His brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all His sisters with us? Where then did this Man get all these things? And they took offense at Him.* [MT 13.54b-57a]

They failed to understand that **The Christ Is the LORD in Flesh and Blood**. Thus, they could not love Him with all their heart, soul, and mind. And failing to fear, love, and trust in God above all things, they could not love their neighbors in His Name. That is our task – and our failure – as well.

Rightly, you say: “Oh, it is utterly impossible for a person to keep these two commandments. Yes, it is impossible for you to keep or perform them. You

cannot do it; God must do it in you, for Him it is possible.” [LW 51.104] Thus, we pray in the *POST-COMMUNION COLLECT*: *we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.* [LSB 183]

Now we can begin to see just how we might fulfill **these two commandments** on which **depend all the Law and the Prophets**. You cannot do it. Nevertheless, you **DO** do it ... **in The Christ Who Is the LORD in Flesh and Blood**. And that is important – that **The Christ Is the LORD in Flesh and Blood**. For the fact that the Christ came in Flesh and Blood – that He is **the Son of David** – simply means that He has put Himself **under** the Law ... for us and for our salvation. As St. Paul declares: ***But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*** [GAL 4.4-5] Which is simply to say that **The Christ Is the LORD in Flesh and Blood** for the purpose of fulfilling these two commandments **for you** ... that **you** might be made a son – a child – of God in a blessed exchange.

We hear it every year at Christmas – this teaching about the incarnation ... the “flesh-and-bloodness” of our Lord and Savior. But it is good to be reminded always – as Jesus does here ... so soon before His death on the Cross by which He gives life to the world. For it is here in this Jesus – Who is both Lord & God and Flesh & Blood – that we have our Christ ... our Messiah ... our anointed Savior from our lovelessness.

For the Savior of the world must be both God and Man – both divine and human ... both eternal and mortal ... both undying and able to die. Our Christ must be Man under the Law so that He might live it and fulfill it. Our Christ must be God over the Law so that He might infinitely live and fulfill it **for us** ... for **all** of us. Our Christ must be Man – mortal and subject to the weaknesses of this human flesh – so that He might suffer **our** infirmities and bear **our** mortal sins in His Body. Our Christ must be God – eternal and subject to no weakness – so that His suffering might be multiplied infinitely ... thus His suffering is suffering **for all**. Our Christ must be Man Who is able to

die, so that He might die the death of the Cross **we** deserve for our lovelessness. Our Christ must be God Who is undying, so that He might conquer death – His and ours – and rise to unending life ... thus gaining **for us** eternal life.

All this – and more – is why the Christ must be and is both David's Son and David's Lord. ***The Christ Is the LORD in Flesh and Blood*** out of love **for us**. And this makes Jesus' question so very much better than the question of the Pharisees. For they ask a question of the Law – as if they ... and we ... could keep the Law sufficiently. Jesus asks a question of the Gospel – how the Messiah keeps the Law of perfect love toward God and neighbor in our stead and on our behalf.

In Jesus, we see that perfect love – God's perfect love toward us, His fallen creation. In Jesus we see the perfect love of God manifest in the flesh – **for us**. Jesus is the ***beloved Son in Whom*** the Father ***is well pleased*** [MT 3.17; 17:15]. But the Son comes as Christ the LORD in Flesh and Blood out of love **for us**. In Jesus we are seeing God the Father's love for us. For just as Jesus does not speak on His Own, but speaks what He has received from the Father [JN 14.10], so likewise He does not act in love on His Own, but acts in accord with the love of God the Father – shown first to the Son ... and then through the Son toward us. In Jesus we see perfect love toward the Father – doing His will in perfect, loving obedience – and perfect love toward the neighbor – since the Son has made Himself our Brother and Neighbor by taking into Himself our flesh and blood to become Man.

***The Christ Is the LORD in Flesh and Blood*** out of love **for us** ... and **for our salvation!** In perfect love, Christ has cleansed us in the waters of Holy Baptism and made us children of our loving heavenly Father. In perfect love Christ pronounces that are sins are forgiven and assures us of the Father's continuing love for us in His Gospel. In perfect love, Christ pours out the forgiveness purchased by His love and gives us His Flesh and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar – that He might fill us with His love in faith toward God and fervent love toward one another.

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]