

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus rest upon each and every one of you this day.

“What do you think about the Christ?” That’s a good question that Jesus asks the Pharisees. “You’re the learned ones. You’re the ones who claim to speak for God. What do you think about the Christ? How do you read/understand God’s Word concerning the Christ?” It’s a good question, but...why does Jesus ask it? On the surface this may seem like Jesus is simply rebuffing the Pharisees’ authority, setting them up by asking them the question so that He can pull the trigger and humiliate them when they inevitably give the wrong answer. That may sound good, but it’s not right. Jesus doesn’t behave as we do. God isn’t constantly on the lookout, just sitting around with an itchy trigger finger, waiting for somebody to mess up so He can drop the hammer and show them who is boss. That’s how we behave.

That’s not Jesus though. Jesus asks this question precisely because He loves these fools, and He loves the ignorant little lambs that these proud fools with the very best intentions are leading astray in their ignorant and pride-filled error. Jesus asks this question because the answer they give, no matter what it is, will provide the opportunity to speak the truth regarding who the Messiah is. Jesus asks this question because He wants to set the record straight; He wants the Truth to be known.

And that’s the beauty of this question. The “truth” of what these Pharisees thought and believed about the Christ—the Messiah, who was the hope and blessed repose of all the faithful in the Old Testament, beginning with Adam and Eve—was wrong, and it was now being made known. The Light of God’s Truth was shining on the darkness of their ignorance and wrong belief. Now, I know that some of you are quick to point out the fact that technically these guys didn’t

give a wrong answer. Technically speaking, Jesus is a son of David. Jesus is a physical, fleshly, biological descendant of King David. They didn't give the wrong answer. They just didn't give the entire right answer.

This is true. But...that's the problem. They only believed and held fast to what they wanted to believe; to what they were willing to accept as "truth." Whatever didn't match up with them and their ideas and notions—their version of "truth"—was automatically rejected as false or wrong. Case in point: The Messiah, as they understood it, was going to be this great and powerful man; a man of the lineage of David who would make Israel great again. Their Messiah would make Israel the economic, spiritual, and social epicentre of all humanity. All the world would be Israel! Such a great man would never do something as foul or "unholy" as eat with prostitutes and tax collectors or hang out with lepers and Samaritans and other "trash" that God despised and was punishing. Such a great man wouldn't be such a lowly schmuck! Such a great man would recognize and praise all the good that the Pharisees did and represented. More than that, such a great man would be easily recognized by such good and wonderful pillars of the Church like the Pharisees. They, of all people, would surely be able to pick the Messiah out of a lineup....and Jesus wasn't this guy! Case closed!

Believe it or not, but we're not here to run them down and talk about them. Yes, they were sinful in their pride and unbelief and ignorance...just like all of us. That's why our Lord comes to us today...for us and our sakes! He doesn't come to us to gossip about the Pharisees and give us a false sense of pride or accomplishment. "Thank God you're not like them!" No. He comes to us today out of love, asking us the same question He asked them, precisely because we are

no different than them or any other sinful child of Adam in need of the life and peace and love that only the Christ of Almighty God Himself can give.

What do you think about Jesus? You see, what you truly think does tend to show itself in the fruits you bear. What you think in the deep, dark recesses of your heart, mind, and soul may very well stand in stark contrast to what you say. Now, we know the right things to say, especially in this particular setting on Sunday morning. We can all offer up very convincing and sincere lip service, fooling everyone in the room, including ourselves. But...what do you think about Jesus? What do you think about the Christ of God? I know these seem like questions that are beneath us. "Of course we think the right things, pastor! We're Lutherans! We're not perfect, by any means, but we're saved through faith alone in God's grace alone because of Christ alone. We think and say the right things about Jesus."

And this leads back to the question: What do you think about the Christ of God; the promise of God in the flesh? Understand: I'm not asking right now about what you believe. What do you think about all this? What's your take on all this? What do you think about the way God handles things? Just look at all the unrest and tribulation in our world right now. Why doesn't God just pull the mask off and make Himself known to everyone? Why doesn't God just strike down enemies like the Taliban, this hideous COVID virus, and Atheism? Why does He permit them to even exist? Why does God continue to keep Himself veiled and hidden as this world crumbles all around us? Why doesn't He do something?! I'll confess that sometimes I get to looking around at all the sin and injustice and pain and sorrow in the world, in my community, in my family life, and my own life, and I don't know what to think. I confess that there are times that I don't think too

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highly of God, or at least I don't think too highly of the way He handles things. His ways are not my ways. So, I ask, "Wretched, sinful man that I am...who will save me from this bondage of death?"

The answer to that question, which we all know, makes no sense at all! The only answer; the One and only who can deliver us and save us from the bonds of sin, death, and damnation is the One and only-begotten Son of God; the very Word and Promise of God, in the flesh. What do you think about that? What can you think about that? With our flawed knowledge and poor logic, we are guaranteed to come to the wrong conclusions about salvation. This is why God doesn't ask you for a theory. He only asks you to trust Him; to believe Him when He says, "It is finished, once and for all!" This is why our Lord calls us to have the repentant, thankful faith of a little child. They don't question things, as we "wise" adults tend to do. There has to be a catch, right? There's ALWAYS a catch!

Nope. It's black and white. The wage of sin is death, and all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And yet...God so loved the world—everyone—that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for it, so that whoever believes in Him and His all-redeeming sacrifice will not perish, but have everlasting life in Him and with Him. What do you think about that? My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: Don't over-think it! It's so easy. It's so simple. It's so tragically beautiful. Don't over-think it. Repent and humble yourself and thank God for it! You are forgiven. You are baptized and redeemed. You are a child of God and a royal heir of His eternal heavenly household. What do you think of that?

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit....AMEN