

*What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?*

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What do you say of Christ? Last week we celebrated the feast day of St. Michael and All Angels and heard how Satan was cast out of heaven, and how we should be joyful because Satan has been defeated and his days are numbered. But this is hard to remember today with so much evil in the world around us. We know well that it is difficult to be a Christian in this world, that the Christian life is not easy, that It is hard to discern the truth among the distractions of the world. It is hard enough to apply the teaching of Jesus to our everyday lives, or to our relationships; to our friends and families. How often have we asked in frustration, *why does any of this matter? What does Jesus want from us?* Or have we like the lawyer tried to figure out what the bare minimum is to be a Christian and to make it into heaven? The Gospel today answers all of these questions in plain and simple language, *You shall Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...and your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* This is nothing new to us because we hear this every Sunday. At first this commandment sounds really easy, until we take into account what exactly is meant by, *with all your heart...with all your soul...and with all your mind...and your neighbor as yourself.* Jesus is not just *exchanging pleasantries.* He expects us to consecrate ourselves totally to Him.

How can He ask such a thing? Because our true end, our destiny as Christians, is found totally in Jesus Christ. Fr. Austin Farrer writes,

*He commands us to love him, because he will have us all to do so. He will not be deprived of any man's love. Nor will he be deprived of any part of our love, for he commands us not merely to love him, but to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. The love of God holds out two hands to catch and take us: one is the commandment that we should love, the other is the act of his own love in the sacrifice of Jesus. He does not mean that we should escape him; see, he has taken us between his two hands.*

Jesus can command this level of love and devotion because He has revealed to us that He is the promised Son of David. Yet, he is not merely an earthly descendant of David. What He means is for us to realize that He is the one whom David prophesied about. When Jesus references the verse from the Psalm, *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till*

*I make thine enemies thy footstool*, He is telling them that He is that very same Lord that will be seated at the right hand of God. He is that very same Lord whose enemies God the Father will make His footstool. David called Jesus Lord, even before Jesus was Incarnate. When Jesus says you must *love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*, He is teaching His disciples and us that we must love Him with our entire being. St. Augustine writes that by reminding us of this commandment that, *He has left no part of our lives which are not to be filled by God*.

There is no part of our lives which is not to be filled by God. But, notice that God says love the Lord, and not fear the Lord. To love God requires a choice, it requires freedom, to fear God requires compulsion. The vows which were made in Baptism, which we renewed in Confirmation, are vows made in freedom for the freedom of life more abundant. They are vows that draw us closer to Christ, that call us again to the love of God with our entire selves. They are vows that mark us and set us apart for Jesus and begin us on our journey to the Kingdom of Heaven, where Christ shall reign forever. The Kingdom of heaven is the inheritance of those who truly love God with their entire being. Of that Kingdom St. Paul writes, *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him*. We should be relieved to know that all things are in God's control, and that Jesus is our high priest and great king. And yet the world cannot comprehend our hope. The Lord was Incarnate in human flesh and yet He shall be seated at the right hand of the Father. He had no place to lay His head, no earthly influence or power over Herod or Pilate and yet He *shall rule even in the midst of His enemies*. The world has never been able to accept a King who is made powerful through weakness. And by loving Him with all of our heart, mind and soul we allow Him to rule over, in, and through us. By loving Him fully there is no room for fear, *for perfect love casts out fear*.

If we truly seek to love the Lord with all of our hearts, minds, and souls, then loving our neighbors as ourselves will become second nature to us. By loving God totally, we will be able to recognize the image of God in all people. This goes just beyond the Golden Rule by the way, *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*. Instead the Christian is called to not just treat others with niceties and pleasantries but to *do for our neighbor as we would do for ourselves*. If we love our neighbor as ourselves then we cannot just go through the motions of doing good deeds for the sake of being nice, we must

instead strive to be Jesus Christ to our neighbors. We must learn to serve our neighbors with their best interest in mind. We must place all of our life, our family, our friends, our neighbors, at the feet of Jesus, that through loving them we may love God. That we may recognize our family, friends and neighbors for what they are, as gifts from God.

*What think ye of Christ? Who do you say He is?* We show what we think of Christ through our relationships. We show what we think of Christ through how much we worry about the world around us. *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like unto it, love your neighbor as yourself.* If we truly did this, we would not have so much time to worry about everything going on in the world today, we would be too busy focused on God. IF we loved God as we ought to, what is wrong in the world, in ourselves, and in our families would be clearer to us. *What think ye of Christ? Who do ye say He is?* With one voice the thousands of saints, martyrs, patriarchs and prophets bear witness that Christ has overcome the world, even this present world. He is seated at the right hand of God, and God shall make His enemies His foot stool. He shall rule even in the midst of His enemies. He shall be the great Lord and Judge of all. But what remains for us is to consecrate ourselves totally to Him. The Kingdom of Heaven and God Almighty, Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, their power and glory, these are not at stake in this world. These have been established since before time began. But what is at stake is our participation in salvation, is our place in that Kingdom. Amen