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This morning it almost seems that Jesus is teasing the Pharisees, those same people who set up the dinner party, or rather the cruel experiment, to see if Jesus will heal on the Sabbath, from last week's Gospel. Last week we saw how those scholars of the Law and Scriptures climbed all over each other to get the best seat at the dinner, only to be put in their place by Jesus. This week the Gospel opens with the simple recognition that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus had stumped the Sadducees. The Sadducees were the other sect of Judaism in Jesus' day, the very same that professed there was no resurrection of the dead. If the Sadducees had failed to debate Jesus, then maybe the Pharisees can and succeed, and so they tried.

The Pharisees begin the debate with a question about the Law, the subject that is their specialty. They ask Jesus, *which is the greatest commandment in the Law?* And Jesus replies with probably one of the most familiar sayings from the Gospels, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two laws hang all the Laws and the prophets.* Jesus points out to them that these two sentences are the central lesson from the Ten Commandments, the resulting 613 ceremonial laws that the Pharisees tried so hard to follow, and the sixteen major and minor prophets of the Old Testament. This exchange was also recorded in Luke's Gospel, and in that version the Lawyer says that Jesus has given the correct answer, but in this version of the Gospel, we do not hear that any response was made by the Pharisees, but it must have shut them down.

And then Jesus takes advantage of the resulting silence that must have followed and asks one of the most haunting questions of all the Scriptures. *What think ye of Christ?* The Pharisees, who had multiplied the Ten Commandments into 613 laws, had also worked out all the ways they would be able to recognize Christ when He came. And Christ Himself stands before them and asks, *What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?* They answer only, *The Son of David*, and their answer, though true, does not narrow it down any. Technically, any blood descendant of King David, and there were many, was a *Son of David*, and could be a Christ, or an anointed one. But the Pharisees missed the point. Now today, when we hear the

question, *whose son is he*, our minds immediately answer, *he is the Son of God*. This is what Jesus is getting at when He says, *how then does David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy foot stool?* He asks the Pharisees, if King David, the greatest earthly king that has ever ruled Israel, calls the Messiah *My Lord*, then how is the Messiah David's son? If one as great as King David calls the Christ Lord, then the Christ, must also be the Son of God. The Pharisees had focused so much on the lineage of King David that they could not comprehend that the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, was standing before them in the flesh.

We find throughout the Gospels that Jesus confronts the expectations of those awaiting the coming of the Christ. The popular expectations of Jesus' day was that the Christ would be a prophet, like Moses and Elijah. But most popularly, they expected the Christ to be a great king or general who would overthrow their captivity to the Roman Empire, and would usher in another Golden age of Israel. They wanted another King David, or King Solomon and all the glory and gold that came with it. Jesus, the itinerant Rabbi from Galilee, the presumed son of a carpenter, was not what the Pharisees had in mind when they thought of the Christ. Yet what Jesus offers them is infinitely better than an earthly empire, or King Solomon's splendor. He offers them an entry into the Kingdom of Heaven.

This morning the Church prays that we will *be granted the grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and with pure hearts and minds to follow the only God*. The Church in effect turns to us and asks us, *what think ye of Christ?* This is the question that each one of us must answer. This is the question we are each answering right now with how we live our lives. What is the answer we are giving? Is He just a nice fellow? Is He a license to sin, writing off on every personal thought and cause? Or is He the God who sits on His throne and has no interaction with the world? Is He the warm and fuzzy God we pull out of a box only on Sundays? 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