

What Does the Christ Think of You?

“*What do you think about the Christ?*” We understand why Jesus would ask the Pharisees this question. The “truth” of what these Pharisees thought and believed about God’s promised Christ was wrong. However... it is worth pointing out that they *technically* answered Jesus’ question correctly. 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.

But...that’s the whole problem. They only believed and held fast to the portions they were willing to believe; to what they were willing to accept as “truth.” Whatever else didn’t match up with their opinions and ideas—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 (politically and militarily); a man of the lineage of David who would make Israel great again. The Christ, as they understood it, would make Israel the economic, spiritual, and social epicenter of all humanity. In their minds, the Christ 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 *clearly despised and was punishing*. Such a great man wouldn’t be such a lowly schmuck! Such a great man would also *obviously* recognize and praise the finer things of God. Naturally, the Pharisees’ version of the Christ would easily 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. The Pharisees, of all people—the *self-proclaimed arbiters of all things good, right, and salutary*—would surely be able to pick the Messiah out of a lineup...and Jesus clearly wasn’t this guy! Case closed! “*We know the Christ, and Jesus ain’t it!*” So, yeah... they technically answered Jesus’ question correctly, and yet they couldn’t have been more wrong in the totality of their faith.

So... what do *you* think about the Christ? That’s the question you need to be concerned about. See, we’re not here today to run down those foolish Pharisees. It would be easy, but that’s not why our Lord gathers us. What do *you* think about Jesus, the Christ of God? *Understand: I’m not asking if you’re a believer or an unbeliever; if you’re pro-Jesus or anti-Jesus*. Just look at all the unrest and tribulation in our world right now: pandemics, insurrection, wars, rumors of wars, natural disasters. What do you think about all this [*Word, Sacrament, Crucifix*]? This is Immanuel. This is Christ in our midst. This [*Crucifix, Word, Sacrament*] is how God addresses all the fear, all the anxiety and worry and wickedness in our world. “*Fear not! I am with you always.*” This is how God addresses and treats all the sinful dysfunction and unbelief in your life. “*Come to Me, all who are weak and heavy-laden. As often as you do this,*

remember what I have said: This is My body. This is My blood.” This is the Christ of God in your midst. This is God’s answer to all your fears, worries, and anxieties.

So... what do you think? I know everyone here will give the correct answer. No one here is foolish enough to deny the real presence of Christ in His Word and His sacraments. No one among us is so foolish that they would deny the Word and promise of the Divine Himself as He deigns to serve us, comfort us, and nourish us with His means of grace. ***No one would be stupid enough to bad-mouth this blessed Christocentric reality.***

And yet... you know as well as I do that this isn’t always the version of Christ we prefer, especially in times like we’re facing right now. We want more, at least more than this [*Word and Sacrament*]. We prefer the Christ who would never allow suffering into our lives in the first place. We don’t think too highly of the Christ who not only permits suffering in our lives, but who actually calls us to take up our crosses and follow Him in faith, almost as if He expects us to suffer. It’s so not fair! We suffer while others prosper. What kind of Christ is that?! We don’t think too highly of the Christ who doesn’t answer our prayers immediately and exactly in the way we want Him to. Is it any wonder that so many “good Christians” fall away from Christ after their prayers aren’t answered and their loved one dies? They don’t think too highly of the Christ who let them down. We don’t think too highly of a Christ who shows mercy to a person we can’t stand; a person we’re absolutely positive deserves a good dose of brimstone and wrath. We don’t think too highly of the Christ who condemns our sins and calls us to repentance; to stop and turn around and flee from our sin (especially if we have to hear such proclamation through a jerk like a pastor). ***Who does this guy think he is?! Who is he to judge me?!*** We have no problem with a Christ who condemns sin... just so long as it’s not our sin. Our preferred Christ has Ten Suggestions for us, but Ten Commandments for everyone else. Our preferred version of Christ turns a blind eye to our sins. He’s like the dad who isn’t angry... just disappointed. He understands though. He understands that it’s different in our case. After all, He knows our heart.

Think on this: The true Christ, revealed to us in Holy Scripture, is not okay with sin. Not even a little bit. Let’s flip this around. ***What does the Christ think of you?*** Just look at this cross! This is what the Christ of God thinks of you and your sin! Your sin is so grievous and deadly and damning that Almighty God Himself gave His only-begotten Son to die in your place. The Christ of God—the anointed High Priest and sacrificial Lamb who is the Son of God—willingly took on flesh and shed His blood in bitter sufferings and death in order to save you from the justly-deserved death sentence of your sin. **Do not be deceived!** This Christ of God does not condone your sin, not now and not ever, no matter the circumstance.

Do you know how much God cares about your sin and your salvation? ***Do you want to know how much God thinks about you?*** Look no further than this thing we call “Divine Service.” This thing we call “in-person worship” is a very big deal... to the Christ of God. There is no substitute. *“Let us not neglect to meet together, as some are in the habit of doing.”* This is why He ***commands*** you to honor His Sabbath; to not reject or despise the good gifts of His holy house—His Word and His sacraments. He loves you enough to send those who will speak the Truth about sin; the Truth of the deadliness of your sin. This is why He calls you to come to Him and confess your sin; to repent of your sin. He doesn’t ask you to try and justify your sin. He doesn’t want excuses or technicalities. ***Repent! Confess! Homologeō*** (which is Greek for “say the same word; the same Word as God.”) *“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the Truth is not in us. But... if we confess our sin, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* This is why He calls and ordains and sends men to ***personally*** speak with His authority the sweet comfort of His absolution. He doesn’t rely on whether or not you ***feel*** forgiven. He removes all doubt. He announces this personal Word of comfort in your very presence.

Your Lord Christ thinks so much of you and your sin and your salvation that He comes to you in the waters of Holy Baptism. He comes to you to bring His cruciform victory to you; to wash away the guilt of your sin; to make you holy and righteous; to cover over your sinful shame and clothe you in the white robes of His perfect righteousness. Look to this altar. ***This [Holy Communion] is what your Lord thinks of you!*** He comes to you—into your very midst—to feed you and nourish you with His medicine of immortality, with His own victorious Body and Blood. This is a very big deal! Your Lord does not take your walk through this shadowy valley of death and tears lightly. ***This is the Christ... for you! What do you think about that?*** Careful, because your actions may very well reveal what you truly think of all this.

Folks: It’s all so plain and simple, black and white. **Don’t over-think it.** 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—the Christ—to die for it, so that whoever believes in Him and His all-redeeming sacrifice will not perish, but have everlasting life. ***What do you think about this [the crucifix]?*** Here is exactly what God has been saying throughout Scripture! Here is the full wrath of God against sin—all sin—and here, at the same time, is the unconditional grace, mercy, peace, and love He has for you and all sinners.

This is why the faithful endeavor to keep the Law of God; to love God with **ALL** our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbors... even the ones we don’t like; all those whom Christ loved enough to die for. We endeavor to keep His

Law, not in order to be saved, *but out of the repentant joy that we are saved, in Christ and because of Christ.* Look to this cross. Look to the Word and Sacraments in your midst. Here is what God thinks about sin, and here is what God does for the sinner! *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 co-heir of the Christ. What do you think of that?

In His name... AMEN.