

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Matthew 22:34-46  
October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Which Is the Great Commandment?

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

Almighty God our Heavenly Father, who hast given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the glorious revelation of the Gospel, cause Thy Word to dwell in us richly, we beseech Thee, and fill us with the knowledge of Thy will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we may know our sin, and Thy Son as the Savior from sin, and may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in knowledge of God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

We meet our Lord + Jesus today in the final days leading up to His crucifixion. This Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew takes place during Holy Week. How does our Lord + Jesus spend His final week before His crucifixion? By being tested and questioned by the Pharisees and Sadducees. Chapter twenty-two of St. Matthew's Gospel has our Lord telling the parable of the Wedding Feast, which we will hear in two weeks, answering questions from the Pharisees about paying taxes, and the question that is asked today about the "great commandment." St. Matthew begins our pericope today by explaining to us that the Lord + Jesus had just silenced the Sadducees. They had asked Him a question about a woman who had seven husbands in this life. Who would be her husband in the life to come?

The Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection of the dead, so it was a trick question. Make the Lord + Jesus choose one of the husbands, and then debate Him further from there. As you may remember, our Lord tells the unbelieving Sadducees that men and women are neither married, nor given in marriage. Then using the Second Book of Moses, commonly called Exodus, because the Sadducees did not accept as Scripture anything but the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, showed them that the Lord God was indeed a God of the living, and not of the dead. He introduced Himself to Moses as the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all of whom were long dead according to the flesh, but were still alive in the spirit in Heaven. Our Lord + Jesus used their own rejection of the rest of the Bible to show them their error.

This left them speechless. They could no longer bring an argument against our Lord + Jesus. St. Matthew tells us that today, the Pharisees, who hated the Sadducees, also took a shot at testing our Lord + Jesus. The Evangelist seems to suggest that they planned out exactly what they were going to question Him about. When they heard He had silenced the Sadducees they gathered together. The question that they put before our Lord was "Which is the great commandment in the Law?" Like the Sadducees, who wanted the Lord + Jesus to choose one of the woman's husbands, their plan was to try to get Him to choose one of the commandments. Whatever commandment He choose, they would

argue for a different one, just like the Sadducees with the woman's husbands. They apparently did not learn a thing from the exchange between the Sadducees and the Lord + Jesus. They tried the exact same tactic. Once again, our Lord does not choose one of the commandments, but instead summarizes the entire Law of God.

Our Lord + Jesus quotes again from the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, the Books of Moses. He quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. They would surely not be able to deny the words of Moses, especially one who is called "a lawyer," one who dedicated his life to studying the Law of Moses. But like the Sadducees, this question is the wrong question. It was a question of the Law. At the heart of the questioning of both the Sadducees and the Pharisees is their unbelief. They claim they have been waiting for the Messiah, the Anointed Savior of the Lord God, but when He comes, they reject Him. He was not the Messiah they wanted. He was not grand enough for them.

They ask a law question, and the Lord gives them a law answer. The answer was that they must perfectly fulfill the Law of God. For one cannot love the Lord God with one's heart, soul and mind perfectly. A person cannot love his neighbor as himself perfectly. We are always choosing other gods. Remember a god is anything from which we seek comfort in times of hardship. We easily trust our jobs, or our possessions, our families, our social status, and even our friends. In times of hardship, we lean on all these other things first, and then when they fail us, then we may go to the Lord God. And as far as loving our neighbors as ourselves, we fail miserably in that whenever we look down our noses at any other person, as we heard preached in a recent sermon.

The Pharisees realize this, otherwise they would have continued to ask Him questions. They had already heard this explained, when a certain lawyer had stood up and asked Him what he must do to be saved. The Lord at that time put the question back to the lawyer, who answered in a very similar fashion to how the Lord + Jesus answers here. The lawyer, however, wanted to justify himself and asked who his neighbor was. Our Lord then told the parable of the Good Samaritan, which we heard a few weeks ago. At that time, our Lord + Jesus pointed the lawyer to Himself. He was the Good Samaritan. He was the One Who rescued us poor sinners who have been beaten half to death by the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. Here He does the same.

The Pharisees, and the Sadducees, had asked a law question. He gives them Himself. He gives them the true Messiah. Therefore, He asks *them* a question. "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" We, who like the Apostles believe that the Lord + Jesus is the Christ—is the Messiah, the Anointed Savior of the Lord God—would probably answer this question the correct way: "The Christ is the Son of God." The Pharisees can only picture the Messiah, the Christ, as a man. They envisioned an earthly ruler who would return the Jewish nation back to its glory days under Kings David and Solomon. They wanted a Messiah who would lead them out of the oppression they endured under the Romans. They were looking only a relief from the pains of this life.

This is not the Christ Who our Lord God sent to us, however. He is not a Savior for the troubles of this earthly life. He did not come to bring peace between nations, but a sword to do battle with our real and true foe, the devil. Our Savior, the Messiah Who has come into this world and put on our flesh to fulfill the Law perfectly; the Law we are unable to keep perfectly, to rescue us from our inability to keep the Law. He has come to deliver us from sin, death and the power of the devil. He has come to do battle with the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. He has come to be victorious where we have failed miserably every day. He has come to fulfill the Law of God, and defeat death and the grave for us once and for all.

Because the Pharisees are looking for an earthly Messiah, a temporal Messiah, a Messiah for this life and world, they are unable to answer the question of the Lord + Jesus. Our Lord even points them to the correct understanding, that the Son of David, was the Son of the Lord—that He was the

Lord God come in our flesh. The Messiah for which they claimed they had been waiting was standing before them, and they could only ask Him questions, and test Him. He was not the Messiah they wanted. They rejected Him. The Lord proved to them beyond a shadow of doubt that He was the true Messiah, the true Christ, the Son of the Lord God, and they only remained silent in unbelief. No one dared ask Him any more questions. Instead, the perfidious Jews went and plotted how they might deliver Him over to be crucified.

Our Lord + Jesus is both the Lord God and man. He is both the Son of David, born of the Virgin Mary, and He is also the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made. Our Lord + Jesus is the Lord God come down from Heaven to redeem us poor, miserable sinners by fulfilling the Law of God for us, and taking upon Himself our punishment upon the tree of the holy cross. He comes to make us sons of God, too. We who cling to Him in faith, have put on Christ, have put on His righteousness, His works. All so that we might live forever with Him in Heaven with all the saints who have gone before us into Heaven.

Before our Lord + Jesus offers up His life as a ransom for ours on the tree of the cross, He is questioned by the religious leaders of His day. He silences them and their questions. He then silently and humbly goes to the cross to win salvation for all those who cling to Him in faith. He has won salvation for us by His death, and He gives us these gifts here in this place through the means of grace. Therefore, my dear friends, let us not question Him or seek out other false gods for when we need comfort from the oppressions of this life, but let us rather cling to Him in faith, and receive forgiveness, life and salvation from Him alone. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*