

Third Sunday in Lent
 March 8, 2015
 Mark 14:61-62

In Christ Jesus, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Who is Jesus? Last Sunday we said that some people often miss the cross of Jesus. They portray Jesus as a kind, gentle teacher of love or a radical rabbi who loved the poor and despised the establishment. Others suggest that he was a martyr for a good cause. If you look around today, you'll find all kinds of answers to the question of Jesus' identity, many of whom are wrong.

Well that same question "Who is Jesus?" was asked by many of His day. When Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Festival of Dedication, the Jews gathered around Him and said, **"HOW LONG DO YOU KEEP US IN DOUBT? IF YOU ARE THE CHRIST, TELL US PLAINLY."** **JESUS ANSWERED THEM, "I TOLD YOU, AND YOU DO NOT BELIEVE. THE WORKS THAT I DO IN MY FATHER'S NAME, THEY BEAR WITNESS OF ME.** (John 10:24-25).

Now while Jesus is standing before the High Priest, He is asked the same question: **"ARE YOU THE CHRIST?"** Are you the Promised Messiah? Here Jesus answered clearly and boldly. He was not afraid to proclaim who He was. He was not shy about proclaiming what He had come to do. We also mentioned that last Sunday. It was not a secret!

But what Jesus said before the high priest in answer to his question also points us to the distant future and the end of the world—judgment day. This morning we see His cross both for what He was doing and for what He would do.

SEE HIS CROSS! IT'S GOD'S PLAN FROM BEGINNING TO END!

I. GOD SENT HIS SON ACCORDING TO HIS PLAN.

The High Priest's question was simple: **"ARE YOU THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE BLESSED?"** Caiaphas, the High Priest certainly knew the Scriptures. He knew the prophecies of the coming of the Messiah. Even using the term *Christ* indicated that he knew God had anointed one person to come and redeem His people. Every Jew was waiting for Christ's appearance. Even many Jews today who do not accept Jesus as the Messiah look for this one to appear at some point to rescue them. The ancient High Priest certainly knew all the prophecies and phrased the question so that Jesus could not avoid the implication and the significance of his question.

Up until that time Jesus had answered nothing to all of their questions, accusations and inquires. His only reply was a calm dignified silence. There was no need for Him to speak. His silence was more eloquent than words could have been. His accusers knew Jesus' silence laid bare their unholy motives and the utter falsehood of all of their charges. After all, when the very witnesses, who are paid to lie, disagree with each other, what is there to defend?

The silence of Jesus and the inability of the false witnesses to make a charge stick, forced Caiaphas to abandon their plan to convict Jesus with false witnesses. So in a bold and dramatic move, he finally presented the real issue. Who was this Jesus? He put Jesus under oath, **ARE YOU THE CHRIST?** The oath was a last resort. The High Priest was demanding that Jesus should stand in the presence of the Most High God and present His testimony with God as His witness. This was the claim the Jewish leaders most objected to---Jesus' declaring Himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God.

In addition, the High Priest cited another reference. He wanted to know if Jesus was the **"THE SON OF THE BLESSED."** By using the term *Blessed* to refer to God, the High Priest was asking Jesus if He was the Son of Jehovah. Devout Jews were forbidden to speak the name Jehovah because it was so revered. The high priest used **"Blessed"** as a substitute for Jehovah, the revered name of God. For these leaders, one who claimed to be the **"Son of the Blessed One"** was making himself equal to God.

No doubt Caiaphas felt he had Jesus now. If Jesus answered "No, I am not the Christ, the Son of God." He would be disgraced in the eyes of the people, an imposter, a deceiver, a false prophet, and He would be making a mockery of everything He had claimed during His ministry. If He answered,

"Yes, I am the Christ, the Son of God" they would have the right to condemn Him to death for blasphemy. It was a capital crime punishable by stoning. Since these Jews did not believe Jesus could be the Messiah, He had to be a liar, a fraud and a blasphemer.

So the question was designed to put Jesus on the spot. It was like so many of the other questions they had put to Jesus, attempting to present a question that would incriminate Him.

Jesus boldly and clearly answered, **"I AM."** He admitted to being the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ. He confessed that He was the one the Old Testament prophets said would come. In effect, He told the council that night what Paul later wrote to the Christians in Galatia: **BUT WHEN THE FULLNESS OF THE TIME HAD COME, GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON, BORN OF A WOMAN, BORN UNDER THE LAW, TO REDEEM THOSE WHO WERE UNDER THE LAW, THAT WE MIGHT RECEIVE THE ADOPTION AS SONS.** (Gal 4:4-5).

Jesus was directing these leaders to see His cross. He declared that He indeed had come as the Messiah. That was God's plan. God had planned for Jesus to be in this court at this time, facing judicial abuse and eventually death. Jesus knew His Father's will and obeyed. **"Yes, I am the Messiah,"** He confessed.

What did that mean for Jesus? It meant that He would suffer and die. Jesus knew the Old Testament Scriptures too. Like the High Priest, He knew that the Messiah would be despised and rejected by men. He knew He would be pierced for the transgressions of all sinners, crushed for all the iniquities of humanity. He knew He would be wounded and punished in the place of all, including the High Priest and those Jewish leaders. The cross was central to the work of the Messiah.

This assertion of Jesus is remarkable. Consider the situation. He had been arrested and bound in the garden. He had been placed in a holding cell in the High Priest's residence, awaiting interrogation. He had been interviewed first by Annas, then by the High Priest, Caiaphas. But Jesus was not whimpering or whining about His treatment. He did not apologize for offending the Jewish leaders. Instead, He left no doubt about who He is. He asserted quickly, clearly, and confidently that He is the Messiah. He was not a simple rabbi from the back country of Galilee. He had come as the Son of God, just as God had planned since before the first sin in the Garden of Eden. There God had said that Satan would bruise the heel of the One who was to come and bring salvation. Here that One was, willing to lay down His life as God had planned to crush the head of Satan.

Why is this so important? First, it is important for us because the world still does not believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One. They will agree that He was a great leader, a wonderful philosopher, a moral teacher. But they will not agree that He was sent by God to rescue sinful creatures from sin, death, and hell. But that is exactly who Jesus is and who He confessed to be.

Jesus knew what He had come to do, and that's important to us because if He had not died on the cross, we would have no salvation. That is the second reason why it is so important to understand who Jesus is. What He did, He did for us because we could not do it. We could offer God no gift—no sacrifice—that would make us worthy in the face of His justice. We could offer nothing to create peace between us and God. We are unable to save ourselves; God had to do it, and He did by sending Jesus the Messiah. While we were still lost and condemned sinners, Christ died for us. We are redeemed by His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death—by His cross. What love for us God demonstrated in the cross of Jesus. The Messiah stood before the High Priest at the beginning of His passion and declared **"I am the Messiah, the Son of God."**

II. GOD'S SON WILL COME AGAIN.

As bold and confident as His confession was, Jesus did not simply stop there. He went on with a surprising comment to His accusers. Jesus said, **AND YOU WILL SEE THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE POWER, AND COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.** Jesus asserted His power. He will exercise all the power of God as He sits at the right hand of God. After He arose from the dead, He declared the same thing. He told His disciples, **ALL AUTHORITY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH.** (Matt. 28:18).

He proclaimed that He will return on the clouds of heaven. He came first as a small child—a baby—in Bethlehem, but He will return in power and glory. Imagine Him as He said these words—

arrested, bound, and about to be beaten and sentenced to death. He looked like a helpless victim of injustice, not the Lord of heaven and earth. It's no wonder that the guards ridiculed Him. They spit in His face, blindfolded Him, struck Him, and then taunted, "**PROPHECY TO US, CHRIST. WHO HIT YOU?**" (Mark 14:65). Later they would challenge Him to come down from the cross. His power and glory were nowhere to be seen, and they made fun of His bold assertion.

Jesus in His humility was allowing this trial to take place. He acknowledged the High Priest's authority over Him, for Jesus was "**made under the law.**" But in the future the tables would be turned. Right now, Caiaphas was Jesus' judge, but on the last day Jesus would be Caiaphas' Judge. Yes, they themselves would see His messianic glory in due time. For **HE IS THE CHOSEN ONE** and there is none other. The lowliness they now saw before them would in due time give way to divine glory. Then He would be exercising divine power over them.

But Jesus really stood trial before His Father and was found guilty of all sins, not His own, for He had none, but for ours. There was none on Jesus' part and that is why we sang in vs. 3 **WHENCE COME THESE SORROWS, WHENCE THIS MORTAL ANGUISH? IT IS MY SINS FOR WHICH THOU, LORD, MUST LANGUISH; YEA, ALL THE WRATH, THE WOE, THOU DOST INHERIT, THIS I DO MERIT.** Yes, it does cause us great sadness and sorrow when we see what Jesus had to go through because of our sins, our sins of lovelessness, of coveting, of discontentment, of unfaithfulness, of anger, greed, lust, laziness, gossip and a whole lot more.

Yet in godly repentance we also rejoice in knowing that what Jesus did, brought about our forgiveness, our redemption, our deliverance, our salvation. What joy to be able to sing as we did in vs. 5 **THE SINLESS SON OF GOD MUST DIE IN SADNESS; THE SINFUL CHILD OF MAN MAY LIVE IN GLADNESS; MAN FORFEITED HIS LIFE AND IS ACQUITTED--GOD IS COMMITTED.**

God is committed! For the Father **CHOSE** His Son in eternity. He so loved this world of sinners--sinners like you and me--that He **GAVE** His only-begotten Son, into this world for us, to take our place, to live for us perfectly, to carry our sins and to die for us upon the cross, to rise from the dead and to come again with glory. Whoever believes this will not perish but have everlasting life!

We believe that Jesus is who He said He is. It assures us that the sins of all humanity are forgiven in Christ, that God has declared all people righteous in Christ. See the cross clearly! Know that we have an eternal home waiting for us. It's all part of God's plan: the cross to redeem you and Jesus' return to bring you to the home God has prepared for all of us who believe in Him. Amen.