

“Understanding the Son of Man”

The disciples have been following Jesus for some time now, but they are oblivious. Jesus has been doing all the miracles that the Prophet Isaiah said the Messiah would do – opening the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf – making the lame man leap like a deer – causing the tongue of the mute to sing for joy. It’s all happening, with Jesus.

But there’s more! Jesus is doing the Daniel 7 thing – the Son of Man thing. This is the second time that Jesus has told these disciples that He is the Son of Man – that He will be handed over, killed, and after three days will rise again.

With the coming of Jesus (to which they have front row seats) you have the coming of the Last Days, the Messianic reign, the culmination of all the Old Testament promises. Jesus will crush the serpents head with His Good Friday death. He will sit upon the throne of His father David, and His reign will be from everlasting to everlasting.

But the disciples are oblivious. The center point of ALL history is coming to fruition in their days – but they don’t understand – they are afraid to ask – they are arguing about who is the greatest.

You know, you are disciples of Jesus too. You follow Him. Each Sunday you come to church and hear the Gospel reading – you hear Jesus doing the Isaiah and Daniel thing – fulfilling the Genesis 3:15 and Davidic king promises with His Good Friday death and Easter resurrection.

You have a front row seat to all of this. Are you oblivious? Do you understand? Is all of this irrelevant? You go about your life as if this Divine Service has nothing to do with the rest of your life?

“What were YOU discussing” as you were driving to church today, or having breakfast? Does Jesus being handed over, killed, and raised to life again have any impact at all on what you were discussing?

The disciples of Jesus are walking along, following Him, and they're arguing about who was the greatest. The Epistle reading for today would characterize their argument as earthly "wisdom" – unspiritual, demonic. It shows that the sinful nature still adheres to the flesh – and controls the thoughts and desires of man.

Arguing about who is the greatest is not meekness – not wise or understanding. It does not lead to things that are pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, mercy, good fruits, impartiality, sincerity and righteousness.

Rather, it shows the bitter jealousy and selfish ambition that rules and reigns within the sinner – leading to boastfulness, lies that do not lead to the truth – disorder and every vile practice. These unspiritual passions lead to quarrels and fights – to coveting, murder, adultery, and enmity with God.

Jesus – the Messiah, the Son of Man, the Davidic king who rules forever – died and rose again to set sinners free from such things.

Do you understand? Are you afraid to ask Him, "what does this mean for me and my life?"

Disciples of Jesus Christ – this is what it means "for you." Who is the greatest? Jesus Christ is the greatest – the very Son of God who came from heaven into His own creation – to live a life of humble obedience – to shed His blood and give up His life --- so that you may be redeemed from sin, death and everlasting damnation.

That's the center point of ALL history! That is the center of your life – and everything else revolves around that – every part of your life is built upon that foundation! The Good Friday death of Jesus sets you free from jealousy and selfish ambition – from those unspiritual and demonic desires that lead to quarreling and chaos in your life.

St. Paul says it so well in Philippians 2 – when he says that Jesus, who is true God – "made Himself nothing, taking the very form of a servant ... He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

The greatest humbled Himself. The First became last of all, and servant of all. Jesus, the Son of God, became your servant. He has saved you for eternity – but that also has meaning and purpose for your life in the here and now.

How? Again, St. Paul puts it so well in Philippians 2. “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus ...”

“Who is the greatest?” Christ is the greatest – and as His disciple, you are to have the mind of Christ – which is to say, you are to consider the little child, your neighbor more significant than yourself – setting them and their needs first, and you becoming last, becoming their servant.

What does this mean? It means considering what your wife needs – and rejoicing to put her needs before your own. You consider the needs of your child – putting away the fear of rejection to give the tough love they need – or putting away the fear and trusting that they will be a faithful child of God.

Now, your sinful nature doesn’t want to do any of this. You don’t want to help your co-worker with a project because then he’ll get the credit, the promotion, the pay raise – but the disciple of Jesus, with eternal life all wrapped up in Christ – is free to rejoice in the success of the co-worker.

No matter what side of the political aisle you are on, your sinful nature quarrels and fights with various governing authorities – and I’m sure you can all picture an individual in your mind. How about this – with the mind of Christ, ask yourself – what do they need? How about praying for their health and success? For wisdom and faithfulness to carry out their duties? For repentance? For understanding that they too are to be last and servant of all?

To be great in the kingdom of God is to believe that in Christ your eternity is secured – and with the mind of Christ, to receive the neighbor with all their needs – humbling yourself to serve them.

Christ humbled Himself for you, and continues to serve you. Receive His Body and Blood as heavenly food to nourish and strengthen you so that you may love your neighbor in these days. Receive His forgiveness of all your sin as the guarantee of life everlasting – setting you free to serve your fellow man in these days.

Disciples – in faith and love, let us follow Jesus – now, and for all eternity. Amen.

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