

“Jesus Christ is my Lord”

In Dr. Luther’s meaning to the Second Article of the Creed, we confess – “I believe that Jesus Christ ... is my Lord.” But what kind of Lord is He? Luther expands on what it means that Jesus Christ is your Lord – by telling you who He is.

He is “true God.” And how do we know this? He is “begotten of the Father from eternity.” Always and forever, that is who He is – from eternity, He is the Father’s Son. And He who is “true God” is also “true man, born of the Virgin Mary.”

The eternal Son of the Father – takes on human flesh, as He is conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. That’s who Jesus is. That’s who your Lord is. God, who has become flesh – true God and true man at the same time – and all of this is “for you.”

Our Passion Reading tonight, taken from the four Gospels, flesh this out for us even more – who our Lord is – by revealing what takes place at Calvary. It’s the God-man Jesus Christ who goes to Calvary. It is your Lord who is crucified, dies, and is buried.

The Calvary account begins at a place called Skull Hill – Golgotha. Some believe that this hill gets its name because it is shaped like a skull – but there may be another reason why it is called the place of the skull.

Have you ever seen pictures of the Crucified Christ with a skull laying at the base of the cross? One tradition holds that this is the skull of Adam, and that Calvary is his burial place. Now, there is nothing in Scripture that tells us this – but this is consistent with what the Scriptures teach about Jesus as the Second Adam.

Because our father Adam sinned, and therefore died – the Son of God comes in the flesh to do what Adam did not do. Jesus, the God-man, lives the life that the Father desires for Adam, and for all his descendants. Having lived the blessed life of obedience to the Father’s will, the Second Adam dies the death that the first Adam and his descendants deserve.

Jesus, our Lord, dies so that we – the descendants of Adam – may not die but live. This is the Father’s desire “for you.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ is “numbered with the transgressors” – crucified between two criminals as if He is nothing more than a common criminal Himself. But as one of them confesses, “this man [Jesus] has done nothing wrong.” That’s true. But, as the Scriptures teach, “He who knew no sin became sin for us.” Your Lord becomes The Sinner – all sinners reduced to One – so that by this One, all sinners might be redeemed.

“Father, forgive them” is His prayer. That is why the One “begotten of the Father from eternity” was “born of the Virgin Mary” – to forgive, redeem, “buy [you] back” from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

As the Lord hangs upon the cross – His garment, woven in one piece, without seam – is given over to those who crucify Him. What a wonderful picture of the one, unified, seamless Gospel of Holy Scripture – “Father, forgive them” – and the Father hears and answers His prayer.

Who is Jesus? Whether he believed it, or not, Pilate got it right when he wrote – “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” That’s what the INRI above Jesus on the cross stands for. He is King. He is your Lord. But how does your King, your Lord, rule?

We see this quite clearly in all of the temptations thrown His way while He hangs between heaven and earth on the cross of Calvary. Like our father Adam, He is tempted to save Himself. Adam falls prey to the temptation, believing the lie of the serpent, desiring to be the god of his own life – and when his sin is laid bare – he attempts to save himself by sacrificing Eve, and blaming God because “you gave her to me.”

“If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross” the people cry. “He saved others; He cannot save Himself” the religious authorities mockingly preach. The world joins the temptations through the mouths of the soldiers – “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.” Even the sinful, unbelieving criminal, has the gall to rail against the Lord, saying – “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.”

Who is Jesus? He is the Son of God who has come in the flesh. He is the One who saved others. He is the King. He is the Christ. And for this very reason – because of who He is – He cannot come down from the cross.

He is the One anointed for sacrifice – the One the Father has sent to rule over sin and death – not by saving Himself, but giving His life as the ransom for many. Your Lord, Jesus Christ – rules, by dying – “for you” – for the forgiveness of all your sin, for your life and salvation.

“Come to Calv’ry’s holy mountain, Sinners, ruined by the fall; Here a pure and healing fountain Flows for you, for me, for all, In a full, perpetual tide, Opened when our Savior died.” (LSB 435.1)

“It was the day of Preparation before the Sabbath, and this was Passover Sabbath ... But when [the soldiers] came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water ...”

This is the “pure and healing fountain” that flows for you. In Holy Baptism, the blood and water of the Crucified One flow “for you” – His holy, precious blood, redeeming the lost and condemned sinner. In the Holy Supper, the blood and water of the Lord is poured out on you – for this is the new testament.

And what is that testament, that promise, sealed in the blood of Jesus? He says it best when He says – “It is finished.” God’s wrath and anger at sin is poured out on His forsaken Son – so that it is turned away from you, His beloved son. Sin’s death is defeated – finished, brought to an end – as your death becomes His, and His life is yours.

When Jesus – true God and true man – dies in your place, He gives up the Spirit and His blood and water “at once” comes forth for sinners. Dearly beloved, your Lord gives you the Holy Spirit so that you may believe that – “It IS finished.”

All this Jesus does “for you.” It is the “Preparation before the Sabbath.” Sabbath means “rest.” The Father’s desire that you may have rest – “It is finished.” In Jesus, you are given rest from the guilt and punishment for your sin. In Jesus, you are given rest from the fear of death. In Jesus, you have life everlasting.

This is what it means when you confess – “I believe that Jesus Christ ... is my Lord.” Amen.

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