

## “The Faith of David”

St. Matthew 22:34-46

October 11, 2020

SERMON 1942

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Our sermon text is from St. Matthew 22:43-44, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool’ ’?”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord, article V. LAW AND GOSPEL says, “<sup>1</sup>The distinction between law and Gospel is an especially brilliant light which serves the purpose that the Word of God may be rightly divided and the writings of the holy prophets and apostles may be explained and understood correctly. We must therefore observe this distinction with particular diligence lest we confuse the two doctrines and change the Gospel into law. This would darken the merit of Christ and rob disturbed consciences of the comfort which they would otherwise have in the holy Gospel when it is preached purely and without admixture, for by it Christians can support themselves in their greatest temptations against the terrors of the law.”

The dialog between the Pharisees and Jesus in today’s Holy Gospel is a perfect example of Jesus’ teaching of law and gospel.

First of all, the Pharisees, unlike the Sadducees, were serious about following the Word of God. Nevertheless, they exclusively taught the law and ignored the gospel.

**The Pharisees considered the law of God to be the good news of the holy Scriptures.** They considered man to be sinful, but thought that God’s grace was shown to man in the giving of the rules and statutes and laws. Man was supposed to keep those commandments and then he would be saved. Thus, for the Pharisee, religion was in terms of human behavior and the keeping of God’s commands.

Their theological system could be easily summed up as works-righteousness. God gives the law, and man becomes righteous by keeping it. In the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector who go to the temple, the Pharisee is simply expressing his trust in the keeping the law, which God gave, when he says, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess” (Luke 18:11-12). **The law of God is not God’s means of salvation. God did give the law, but not so that we could be saved by keeping it.**

We live in a world in which all limits to human behavior are considered to be bad. Post-modernism teaches that everything is relative. There is no universal truth. What is true for you; may not be true for me. Mankind is being driven by the winds of change, without an anchor. **For those who have lived without the laws of human behavior—whether natural law or divine law—the law can seem to be a welcome and comforting thing.**

As parents, we set the bedtime for our children. We allow them to go only so far in our neighborhood. We require the eating of certain foods and restrict the wearing of certain clothes. We have rules concerning appropriate language and behavior. We do this because we love our children. It is a comfort for our children. They function better when they get enough sleep and eat healthy meals. The child is more pleasant to others when they learn proper social behavior.

**Similarly I can see how some might want to major in God's laws. God's laws are comforting and good for us.** Those who do not commit adultery will tend to stay married. Those who don't steal or kill, will stay out of jail. Those who attend church will hear the Word of God and enjoy the good company of moral people. They will be encouraged by others to lead a godly life. It only makes sense that the Triune God who created the world, as well as mankind, would know what is best for us. **Nevertheless, the law of God is not the good news of the Holy Scriptures.** The gospel message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is the good news!

When the Pharisees asked about the great commandment in the law, **Jesus doesn't simply give direction about outward human behavior.** Outward human behavior is summarized in the second table of the law, which is found in commandments 4 through 10. Jesus does mention that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. Christ's teaching is not merely an internal belief, but that faith is shown forth in outward behavior. Jesus said, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Now take note of Jesus' answer. **Human behavior is secondary to the love of the Lord God.** The first table of the Law teaches us that God desires faith more than human behavior. In Article IV of the Apology it says,

<sup>34</sup> Our opponents concentrate on the commandments of the second table, which contain the civil righteousness that reason understands. Content with this, they think they satisfy the law of God. Meanwhile they do not see the first table, which commands us to love God, to be sure that God is wrathful at our sin, to fear him truly, and to be sure that he hears us. But without the Holy Spirit, the human heart either despises the judgment of God in its smugness, or in the midst of punishment it flees and hates his judgment."

**The laws of God cannot be kept without their first being faith in Christ, the Son of God sent by the heavenly Father.** Jesus clearly tells them that before you get to the love-your-neighbor things, there needs to be **a new heart that loves God.** As it is, the law of God renders a judgment against each and every man that they have fallen short of keeping God's commandments. All have sinned and fallen short of God's law. God's threatens to punish all who have broken his law. The human heart cannot love God without the work of the Messiah, the Christ.

The problem with the Pharisees is not that they only understand 50% of the Word—accepting the law but rejecting the Gospel. The Pharisee's problem is that that they misunderstand a 100% of the Word. They don't even understand the law of God correctly. **They think that they have satisfied the law of God, when they have not. Their proud heart trusts in their own judgment and despises the judgment of God.**

Here is God's judgment from the Holy Scriptures. The heavenly Father desires that the Law would reveal the sinfulness of our hearts. He desires that we confess our failures to keep the law and trust in His gift of Jesus Christ, who is the beloved Son in whom the Father is well-pleased. With a new heart which trusts in Jesus' forgiveness

we are to do good works of thankfulness. The Pharisees reject God's judgement and try to use their keeping of the law to get to heaven. **Their hearts despise God's judgment concerning their failure to keep the law, and concerning His judgement that we receive the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ through faith.**

Having told the Pharisees that God desires us to love His judgment as revealed in His holy Word, Jesus directs these hard-hearted men to the actual good news or Gospel, which is found in the Word. They know the answer to Jesus' question about the Christ, but their heart doesn't trust in it. They know that the heavenly Father had promised to send a Christ and that He would be the Son of David, but that teaching doesn't fit into their works-righteousness theology. They figure that if they can keep the law—as they wrongly imagine—why should they need a Christ?

Furthermore, Jesus teaches that David, who is a mere man, has called the promised Christ by the title, Lord. King David has confessed that the Christ who will be one of His human descendants is also the divine Lord. The Christ is both true man and true God. If sinful man by himself is able to keep the law, then why does the Christ need to be the Son of God?

Jesus Christ is standing before them and claiming to be God in the flesh. Jesus is the love of God, which the Father desires for us to cling to with our whole heart. Though the judgment of the law condemns us in our conscience, the perfect love of God in Jesus Christ drives out fear. **The gospel message is the promise that the Christ's perfect life and His innocent suffering and death have earned our salvation and are to be received by faith for the forgiveness of sins.**

In this world, an outwardly moral life is better than an immoral life. Your behavior may rise above other sinners. However, those human works will not sustain you in the midst of trials, when you must face a holy God. An outwardly moral life will not provide comfort against the terrors of the law, which threaten us. **The only good news is the forgiveness of sins earned by the beloved Son of God, Christ Jesus.**

Jesus speaks of **the faith of King David**, who was looking forward to the coming of His Lord. King David did not trust in his own works, of which the Scriptures describe many. David did not consider that he could defeat his enemies by his own works. David trusted in the promised Messiah, as did all of the godly Old Testament believers. They all trusted in the coming Lord and son of David. They all held to the gospel which sustained them in trials and temptation.

Jesus says to the Pharisees, "What do you think about the Christ?" In reality, they didn't think about the Christ much at all. And, thus, we see that they didn't love the things which God loved, either, or they would have loved His beloved Son. In contrast, we see that King David did think about the Christ, and professed His faith in that Savior. Furthermore, David confessed that the Lord Christ would bring divine help for human sinners. Though David defeated Goliath, even that victory would not stand up to God's judgment. The only victory which mattered was the completed victory of the Christ, who then was welcomed to sit at the Father's right hand, saying, "till I have Your enemies Your footstool."