

Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost
August 23, 2020

(Read the prayers and scripture readings and recite the Creed aloud, even if you are by yourself, in order to hear with the ears each one. Sing or read the final hymn aloud.)

Prepare for worship: Sit in silence or with soft music for a few moments

Call to Worship:

Surely the Presence of the Lord (UMH 328)

Surely the Presence of the Lord is in this place;

I can feel his mighty power and his grace.

I can feel the brush of angels' wings,

I see glory on each face;

surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

- Lanny Wolfe

Centering Words:

Jesus wants everyone to embrace Him as their Lord and Savior.

Affirmation of Faith: Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,

Prayer of the Day:

Father God, we thank you for your numerous blessings and your forgiveness of our sins. God, we ask that anyone in our Church Family and anyone watching this sermon who is not or not yet a part of our family, that if anyone is undergoing any kind of pain or has a loved one who is undergoing any kind of pain, be it a physical pain, an emotional pain, a spiritual pain, a financial pain or a psychological pain, that you heal us of our pain, Dear Lord, that you restore us and fill our hearts with strength and hope. Please relieve us of the distress and pain that we feel. You, God, are the Ultimate Physician. Remind us, Father God, to encourage others, to give of ourselves to others, to lend a compassionate ear to others, and to set an example for others. It is in the Precious Name of Your Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, that we pray, Who taught His disciples to pray...

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination:

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

Epistle Reading Romans 12:1-8

Psalm 124

Old Testament Reading Exodus 1:8-2:10

Special Music

Gospel Reading Matthew 16:13-20

Sermon “Son of Man and Son of God”

Hymn; *My Hope is Built (UMH 368)*

1. My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Refrain:

On Christ the solid rock I stand,
all other ground is sinking sand;
all other ground is sinking sand.

2. When Darkness veils his lovely face,
I rest on his unchanging grace.
In every high and stormy gale,
my anchor holds within the veil.

(Refrain)

3. His oath, his covenant, his blood
supports me in the whelming flood.
When all around my soul gives way,
he then is all my hope and stay.

(Refrain)

4. When he shall come with trumpet sound,
O may I then in him be found!
Dressed in his righteousness alone,
faultless to stand before the throne!

(Refrain)

Benediction:

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen

Response:

God Be With You till We Meet Again (UMH 673)

God be with you till we meet again;
by his counsels guide, uphold you,
with his sheep securely fold you;
God be with you till we meet again.

“Son of Man and Son of God”

By Tom Geddens

Matthew 16:13-20

This is the Word of God for the people of God! Thanks be to God!

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, I pray that this message will be acceptable to You. May Your Father please send the Holy Spirit to strengthen my heart and give me courage and confidence. I pray in Your precious name. Amen.

I have two bookmarks that share a couple of things in common. They were both given to me by two separate friends and they both have a list on them of most of the titles that we Christians associate with Jesus. Titles such as “Son of God.” Yes, that is probably the most popular one, wouldn’t you think?

Other titles include “Lord and Savior,” “Messiah,” “Lamb of God,” “Emmanuel,” “King of Kings,” “Prince of Peace.”

I think it is safe to say that none of you are surprised to hear that those titles made the lists on my two bookmarks! I was not surprised, however, that one title associated with Jesus did not make the list on either bookmark. But here is the funny part, or at least it’s funny to me: This one title that did not make the list on either bookmark is the one title that Jesus uses in the Four Gospels more than any other to identify Himself! You heard it in our Gospel reading just now, in the opening verse to the reading: Matthew 16:13, when Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man in all Four Gospels for a whopping total of 88 times!

How about that? Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man 88 times and yet when Christians design a bookmark listing most of the titles associated with Jesus, “Son of Man” doesn’t even make the cut!

In fact, if you want to impress your Christian brothers and sisters with some more Christian trivia, then consider this: Jesus only refers to Himself as the Son of God twice in the Bible; both times, perhaps uncoincidentally, are chronicled in the Gospel of John. Those two verses are John 5:25 and John 11:4.

As we explore why “Son of Man” is something of a forgotten title for Jesus, it might be helpful to begin with a simplified definition of “Son of Man” and one for “Son of God.” “Son of Man” refers to Jesus’s humanity when He, the Word, was with us in the flesh. “Son of God” refers to His Divinity.

Jesus was both human and divine during His presence in the flesh, therefore both titles apply, because each title refers to one half of His unique nature. I think that many Christians unknowingly reject the title “Son of Man,” because they assume that it means that Jesus was just that: a man and nothing more. In fact, Christianity’s critics have long tried to use Jesus’s abundant use of “Son of Man” versus His more conservative use of “Son of God” as proof that Jesus was only a man and not Divine. They’ll say, “See! He called Himself the Son of Man 88 times! He never said that He was God! That’s just something that you crazy Christians made up!”

Okay. Did you forget the part about Jesus saying, “I and My Father are One”? Did you forget the part about Jesus saying, “If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father”?

The roots of the title “Son of Man” can be traced back to the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament. Daniel apparently uses “Son of Man” to mean “Messiah” in Daniel 7:13-14, where he writes, “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of Heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His Kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.”

You see, there was already during the days of His ministry a clear theological underpinning to the title “Son of Man.” You might even say that “Son of Man” was an under-the-radar way for Jesus to say that He was the Messiah. Recall the last verse that I read from our Gospel reading, Matthew 16:20, where Matthew writes, “Then He (meaning Jesus) commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.”

Many Biblical scholars believe that the reason for Jesus commanding this was that He knew that He would be arrested prematurely by the religious authorities on the grounds of blasphemy if word got around that He was proclaiming to be the Messiah. Obviously, He eventually was, but Jesus wanted to be careful that it did not occur before its proper time. The title “Son of Man” did not have the same resonance with Jewish ears of that day that “Messiah” and “Son of God” had. Also, the title “Messiah” carried with it some military baggage. The Jewish people of that day pictured the Messiah as one who was going to take up the sword against the Romans. The Zealots, such as Barabbas, especially embraced that vision, being men of the sword themselves. Jesus, however, had no such agenda. The title “Son of Man” was therefore a kinder and gentler version of “Messiah,” you might say.

We may think that where “Son of Man” can confuse even longtime Christians, “Son of God,” on the other hand, is a title that everyone understands, when in fact, that one, too, has suffered its share of misinterpretation. “Son of God” does not mean that Jesus was born of God. “Son of God” means that Jesus is God in the flesh. For clarification on that, read John 10:30-36.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus asks His disciples, “Who do folks say that I am?” Perhaps it was Andrew who said, “John the Baptist.” Perhaps it was James, John’s brother, who said “Elijah,” while Phillip may have been the one who cited Jeremiah. What many people were saying in Jesus’ day is something that many people are saying still today: that Jesus was a great teacher with an extraordinary gift for words and a considerable amount of charisma. But He was nothing more than that, they say.

There has long been a school of thought that teaches a concept known as “The Historical Jesus.” By that, they mean that they believe that the New Testament paints a mythically overblown picture of Jesus as Divine, when in fact, they say, Jesus was just an ordinary man who had many great words of wisdom to impart but who never performed any miracles and was never raised from the dead.

Many years ago, I read several books in this school of thought. I was still searching for the Truth and was willing to consider multiple viewpoints. But no matter how intelligently and persuasively written their words were, nothing resonated with me like the Word with a capital “W.” I eventually came to realize that Peter’s answer was not merely a “good answer,” as people are fond of saying on TV game shows, but the only answer: Jesus is The Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Moreover, I believe Jesus when He said that no one comes to the Father except through Him. I do not believe that there are multiple paths to Salvation. Jesus spoke of only One Path, that Path being Him. I know that many people find that exclusionary, and they argue that humanity must always strive for inclusion instead. But I argue that God made man, meaning “humanity, both men and women,” in His Own Image. That is one of the greatest compliments that anyone can receive! And then He came to Earth in the form of His Own Son, suffered a cruel death so that we could be freed from sin, and then conquered death three days later. That was the greatest gift from God of all and it was given to every one of us, men and women of all nations and all races! You can’t get any more inclusive than that!

Jesus wants to include everyone. He wants everyone to embrace Him as their Lord and Personal Savior. In the past, whenever I would hear a preacher denounce other religions, I would cringe. In fact, I think that a lot of Christians cringe these days when they hear other religions being denounced by Christian pastors. I strongly believe in religious freedom and do not wish to prohibit anyone from following whatever religion he or she wants to follow. Just like I do not want anyone prohibiting me or any of my fellow Christians from what we believe in. But while you can respect other religions and respect others’ religious rights, as a follower of Christ, you are called to believe Jesus when He said that He is the Way and the Truth. It is only through Christ that one gets to God’s Kingdom. People may ask me, “Tom, don’t you have friends of other faiths and friends of no faith? Since they reject Christ, are you okay with the thought that they might not get to Heaven?”

I love my friends of other faiths. I love my friends who have no faith. I hope and pray that every one of them will one day embrace Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Personal Savior. Even if they never accept Christ in this life, I still hope and pray that when they have left this life and

are on the cusp of the next, that when they hear that voice asks them, "Who do you say that I am?" that they will earnestly reply, "The Christ, the Son of the Living God."

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! Amen.