

XVIII Trinity 2025

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

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St. Matthew 22.34-46

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Why didn't the Pharisees and Sadducees get along? Simply put, there were significant theological, social, political and sociological differences that separated the two groups within Judaism. There was, however, one thing they had in common...they both hated of Jesus...but for different reasons...and they wanted to get rid of him.

The action in today's Gospel takes place during the final week of Jesus' life on Earth. He knew the Sadducees and Pharisees had already decided they had to get him killed. He threatened the religious and political influence they had over the people, and the cozy relationship they had with the Roman Government. Jesus had to go.

Earlier, Jesus had silenced the Sadducees when they tried to trick him with a question about life after death and marriage in heaven. The Pharisees believed in the raising of the dead, heaven and angels...the Sadducees did not. The Sadducees believed death was the end, with no hope for anything after this life.

Jesus told the Sadducees they were wrong about life after death and marriage in heaven. They didn't know their own Scriptures or God's power. If they did, they wouldn't have asked the question in the first place. There was no need of marriage in heaven because we would be like the angels (we do **not** become angels when we die). In Exodus God says he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...he is the God of the living, not the dead.

Satisfied Jesus had the last word with the Sadducees, the Pharisees who did believe in the raising of the dead, now saw this as their chance to trick Jesus with a question of their own. One of them asked him which is the greatest commandment. Jesus tells them all of the commandments and the teachings of the prophets depend on loving God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our minds., and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Jesus now has a question of his own for the Pharisees. He asks them to tell him what they thought about the Messiah and whose descendant he was. They answered he would be a descendant of King David. Jesus then asked them why the Holy Spirit inspired David to call him 'Lord'? David said, 'The Lord said to my Lord; sit here at my right side until I put your enemies under your feet.' If David called him 'Lord', how can the Messiah be David's descendant?"

In his commentary on today's Gospel, Father Massey Shepherd writes: *"Our Lord turned the tables on his questioners by asking them for an interpretation of a Scripture passage, which they dared not give; the answer demanded of them a positive acceptance or rejection of his claim to Messiahship and the true nature of His Person"*.

"Lord" was a title of respect and would have been used by a young person when addressing his father, uncle or an elder. It refers to someone who has power and authority over others. A father or an uncle would never have called his son or nephew 'Lord'. There were times when I was growing up I called my father "Sir" out of love and respect. I don't think he ever called me 'sir'...that would have caught me off guard. He showed his love for me in different ways.

Jesus quotes Psalm 110 to make the point the religious experts who were always trying to trick him with what they thought were clever questions, really didn't understand the truth about their own religion. They should have known why "the Lord" would say to "my Lord" to take the place of honor at his right side. "The Lord" is God the Father. He calls the Messiah "my Lord". God the Father tells the Messiah to take the place of honor reserved for him at his right side.

King David was great; the Messiah is greater. Jesus is greater than David. The only way God the Father would say to the Messiah to come and sit down at his right side, in the place that was rightfully his, the only way King David could call his own descendant, Jesus, his "Lord", is if the Father and Jesus are one and the same...God. Jesus said, "Before Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I AM."

The Gospel demands we too accept or reject the claim Jesus makes to being the Messiah. We call Jesus our Lord and King...and he is. He is Lord over and above King David and all of his other descendants. He is Lord over all earthly kings, presidents, and prime ministers. He is Lord over all bishops, priests and deacons. He is Lord over all of us.

Jesus offers us hope for life everlasting, and we believe in a God of the living, not of the dead. And it is only by the power of God's Holy Spirit at work within us, we are able to say with conviction, Jesus is our Lord and King.

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