

Session #6 – Christology

Read: Chapter 4, pp. 101-121

Introduction

Jesus Christ is both God and man: one person, two natures. This uniquely Christian teaching is also uniquely challenging to our understanding... and yet uniquely blesses us, solving our greatest challenges and answering our deepest questions.

Opening Prayer – Collect L10

Almighty God, You have poured into our hearts the true Light of Your incarnate Word. Grant that this Light may shine forth in our lives; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Opening Hymn – LSB 556: Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice

Scripture –

Colossians 1:15-20

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the

beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. ¹⁹For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

Galatians 4:4-6

⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as

sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”



*Weimar Altarpiece, Central Panel
Lucas Cranach the Elder, completed
1555 by Cranach the Younger
Stadtkirche Sankt Peter und Paul*

Quotes and Questions from Veith:

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

“The dominant religious sensibility today, to be found among both Christians and the ‘spiritual but not religious,’ has been described as ‘moralistic therapeutic deism.’ Lutheran Christianity is pretty much the opposite of this. (102)

“People today may not be moral, but they are ‘moralistic’; that is, they believe their spiritual standing, along with that of others, hinges on how good they are...(102)

“...contemporary spirituality tends to be ‘therapeutic,’ as in the prosperity gospel and the self-help books...(102)

“According to ‘deism’... [God] is not particularly demanding or judgmental... He basically just leaves us alone.” (103)

- Does this summary of current views (based on Christian Smith and Melissa Denton’s work in 2005) seem accurate to you? What might not?
- What makes each of these appealing: moralism, therapeutic emphasis, deism? What are the dangers of each?

Comprehending God

“The God who does exist, according to Scripture, is quite different. He is holy... far above us and our comprehension. He is to be feared. He is complicated, to put it mildly. To be sure, He is good, but this righteousness manifests itself in a terrifying wrath against sin. And yet hidden behind His judgment... is His love. Both are equally unfathomable.” (104)

“Lutherans... while affirming in the strongest possible terms the transcendence of God, insist that human beings dare not contemplate Him apart from His self-revelation and incarnation in Christ...(105)

“Luther stressed that the reason God became incarnate in Christ is that this is the only way that we radically limited mortals can know Him. We dare not presume to come to conclusions about God and His disposition toward us except through Jesus Christ.” (109)

- How is this limiting? How is it freeing?
- How does this affect our view of Scripture and its purpose?

The Problem of evil

“If in Christ God suffers and God dies, that has profound implications for the problem of evil and suffering. The question, as ordinarily framed – If God is all good and all powerful, why does He allow evil and suffering in the world? Why doesn’t He do something about it? – assumes the transcendent, detached God of Deism... (114)

“He was pierced for our transgressions’ and ‘crushed for our iniquities’... This addresses the problem of evil... He [God] neither allows it nor does nothing about it. Rather, He takes it into Himself. Furthermore... ‘He has borne our griefs’ and ‘carried our sorrows.’ This addresses the

The Spirituality of the Cross Study Guide

Pastor Rob Morris, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Summer 2023

problem of suffering... He neither allows it nor does nothing about it. Rather, He takes it into Himself. 'With His wounds we are healed,' both of our sin and of our suffering, as the death of God Incarnate ushers us into an eternal life, in which sin and suffering are no more." (115) [References from Isaiah 53:3-5]

- Has the problem of evil or the problem of suffering ever caused you to doubt God or to turn from your faith? Do you know others who have been affected by either question?
- How does Christ's cross address both problems?
- Why does this require Christ's divinity?

Comprehending the Cross

"The transaction between the persons of the Trinity that took place on the cross, culminating in the Son being forsaken by the Father (Mark 14:34), staggers any human comprehension...(116-117)

"In place of an indifferent, inactive deity, the cross discloses a God who enters the darkest places of the human condition and gives Himself to overcome the evil. This is a God who shares our agonies and helps us to bear them. This is a God who loves us. This is a God who is for us." (117)

Connections with Small Catechism:

The Apostles Creed:

The Second Article [I believe] in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord...

What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won [delivered] me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, in order that I may be [wholly] His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

Baptism:

What does such baptizing with water signify? It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise; who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written? St. Paul says Romans, chapter 6: *We are buried with Christ by Baptism into death, that, like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Conclusion

Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect man, took on our flesh in order to rescue us from sin, death and the devil. This has always been God's plan, since before the beginning of time. Our Lutheran understanding of Christ's divine and human natures united in one person is central to our faith and spirituality, offering God's answers to life's most difficult questions.

Closing Prayer