

POSSIBLE Prayer of Church 🕊 18th Sunday after Trinity ✠ October 4th, 2026

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

LORD God, fix our faith on Your love shown to us in Christ. Give us Your Holy Spirit. Increase our love for You and for our neighbors. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Give peace, O LORD, to those who wait for You, and let Your preachers be proven faithful. Preserve Your Church, and let all Christians be glad to enter into the house of the Lord. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Heavenly Father, Your Son is Bridegroom and LORD, faithful over Your house, the Church. Raise up the sons and daughters of our congregations to follow Your Word, and bless their families with godly lives. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

LORD of lords, by the reign of Your Son You govern all things in heaven and earth. Raise up true Davids among us to govern our land in faithfulness and in humble strength to do Your will. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Eternal Father, our LORD Jesus Christ is seated at Your right hand, even now subjecting every enemy under His feet. Give this certain confidence to us and to all Your saints in this vale of tears, to the needy, the troubled, the joyful and the expectant and all those suffering in body, mind or soul, [*especially **Faith & Our Savior Prayers.***] ... and all those we each name and keep in our hearts in personal [*Silent*] prayer. Deliver them [all] in Your good and gracious Will. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

O God, You give us Your Son's body and blood, that we may taste and see that You are good. Grant that we may use Your gifts faithfully and frequently draw near to Your table in true repentance. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

LORD of hosts, You have shared Your own glory with Your saints, seating them on the thrones of Your heavenly reign. Draw us also to Your house to sit among them as David and all the Saints of old, and so receive Your heavenly benediction. *LORD, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. **Amen.**

TRI.18 Matthew 22:34-46 JESUS: CONSERVATIVE OR LIBERAL? 10.4.26 F.OS.

DONKEY or ELEPHANT? Is Jesus a **conservative** or a **liberal**? People have tried to make the case for both. Some would say He's conservative because His Word clearly speaks against abortion and homosexuality and it speaks for truth that doesn't change or get watered down with the times. Others would say He's liberal because He railed against certain traditions and opposed the rich and the powerful and because He reached out to the outcasts and showed mercy to the worst of sinners. Jesus is not easily categorized, is He. He is bigger than our attempts to classify Him in such a way that He fits our agenda and promotes our causes. He gets into trouble with people across every part of the spectrum.

PHARISEES & SADUCEES There were **two particularly significant religious groups** in the days of Jesus. One was the **Pharisees** and the other was the **Sadducees**. Now the Pharisees we're pretty familiar with. They were the steadfast legalists, the fundamentalists of the Jewish religion. The Sadducees, however, were on the other end of the spectrum. They were maybe more like the liberal theologians of today. The Sadducees didn't believe in the **resurrection of the body**. They didn't believe in the existence of **angels**. They basically believed that all that was real was the **physical, material world**, and that's what you should focus on in seeking to live a holy life. The Sadducees tended to be more the elite, upper-class types. The Pharisees tended to be more popular with the masses.

LAY A TRAP **Both of these groups had problems with Jesus.** Because He didn't fit in with the agenda of **either** of them. And so when they spoke to Him, they would often try to trap Him in His words in such a way that their point of view would be shown to be right. However, neither group was able to do this with any success at all. The wisdom and the truth of our Lord Jesus always won the day and triumphed over the scheming of these men.

WE "LAY TRAPS" TOO The way the Pharisees and the Sadducees tried to relate to Jesus **can show itself in us, too.** All too often we want Jesus to fit into our way of thinking rather than trying to fit our thinking into His. By nature we want to use God's Word to justify what we already believe rather than giving up our preconceived notions to believe what God's Word teaches. **We want Jesus to help us further our own agenda rather than desiring to follow His agenda,** His ways. It's much easier for us to be a part of some group than it is to be like Jesus, who didn't conform to the definitions of any worldly group or organization. In the end every attempt to make Jesus or His Word fit our mold will fail.

DOABLE LAW? The question posed to Jesus in the Gospel is **an example of that.** In an attempt to make the Law manageable and doable, the Pharisees ask Jesus, "*Teacher, which is the Great/est*

Commandment in the Law?" Putting it in our terms, the question might be, "What's the **main thing I've got to do**? What's the **bottom line** here? What's the **minimum** that's necessary for me to be a Christian? How much do I really have to pray or hear God's Word or give in offerings?" This approach tries to "**domesticate the Law**," turning it into a household pet that you take for a walk whenever you want to look religious. It substitutes **values** for *perfection*, **decency** for *holiness*. But God did **not** say, "Have family values" or "Do your best to be a nice person." He said, "**Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.**"

GREAT/EST COMMAND Jesus answers, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.**" That's not something you can reduce down to a bunch of do's and don'ts. For that Law commands you to love God with every fiber of your being, all that you are, with nothing held back from Him. God seeks not the minimum but the maximum. He wants the entire devotion of your heart; all of your love, your allegiance to be with Him alone.

2ND GREAT COMMAND And Jesus doesn't stop there, in case someone thinks that loving God means leaving ordinary life and your fellow man. He goes on, "*And the Second (Great Commandment) is like (the first): 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*" These two go **side by side, hand in hand**. The love of God and the love of the neighbor are inseparable. You cannot claim to love God if you don't love your neighbor. For God seeks to be loved in your neighbor. The Lord Jesus – Who took up our nature and truly shares in our humanity – is present in all those around us, particularly those in need, to receive our acts of kindness and self-giving. That's why Jesus says that the commands are alike: Because God is served both in love for Him and in love for our neighbor.

LAW = L-O-V-E. So if you had to **summarize the Law** of God, it would be in that one word: "**L-O-V-E.**" And love is never a lowest common denominator, a minimum requirement. It is limitless in how it is to be expressed and shown. It requires all that you are and all that you have.

LOVELESS **And that's where we run into trouble.** The Law always accuses and condemns us for falling way short of that. It exposes our **loveLESSness**. It exposes our self-satisfying motivations when we engage in "loving works." It leads to nothing but judgment and death.

[WHERE'S THE] **GOSPEL** **Repent**, therefore, and **turn to Christ**. Jesus here gets us back on the track that leads to salvation and life. The Pharisees had asked a **Law question**, but now Jesus asks a **Gospel question**, not one that focuses on us, but one that focuses on Who He is. He asks them, "*What do you think about the Messiah? Whose Son is He?*" They said to Him, "The Son of David." And that was correct. God

promised King David in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be one of His descendants.

GOSPEL QUESTION #2 Jesus then asks them this question, "*How then does David in the Spirit call the Messiah 'Lord' in one of the Psalms?*" You see, under ordinary circumstances in Jewish culture it would be the son who refers to the father as lord or master, not the other way around. **And yet here David, the father and the great ancestor of the Christ, refers to his descendant as Lord.** Jesus asks them, "*Why is that?*" Just as the Pharisees had tried to trap Jesus in a **Law question**, Jesus here tries to "trap" them so to speak in a **Gospel question**, to get them to see the saving reality of who He is.

WHAT KIND OF MESSIAH[?] The Jews had been conceiving of the Messiah as being a combination of a **great prophet** and a **powerful political leader**, but always in the end only a **man**. But Jesus here is leading us to see that He is more than just a man. David calls Him **LORD** and **Master** because Jesus, his literal descendant, is also **truly and fully God**, the everlasting Son of the Father.

HE DID IT ALL! Here, then, is where the **Good News** is for us. Jesus, **thankfully**, does not come fitting into our mold. He does not act according to our expectations, but in a manner that is infinitely higher and better. He comes not in the way of our fallen, self-serving humanity but in the way of His perfect self-giving humanity. Jesus is the only man in whom God's love is perfectly embodied. Jesus **kept the Law perfectly** for us and in our place. **He loved His heavenly Father** with all His heart, with all His soul, and with all His mind. And Jesus **loved His neighbor** as Himself. He gave Himself completely to those around Him, **healing** them, **helping** them, **teaching** them saving truth. In the end He **gave His life away, laying it down for us on the Cross**. Through that perfect act of love and self-giving, Jesus won for us the **full forgiveness of our sins**. **Baptized** into His Body, trusting in His love, we share in His Image. His self-sacrifice has saved us from judgment and has brought to us instead everlasting life. For Jesus is risen from the dead as the conqueror of the grave. True God and true man, He is now seated at the Right Hand of the Father to pour out His life on us by His Holy Spirit and to prepare us for the Day of the Resurrection.

YOUR SAVIOR & BROTHER So then, it's best not to say that Jesus is conservative or liberal. Better said, He is your **Savior**, the One Who is **pure love** in the flesh, Who **gave everything for you**. You are **sanctified** and **cleansed** in Christ Jesus. You are **saints** before God – **not** because of the Law and/or what **you** have done, but because of the **Gospel** and what **Jesus has done**. Continue, therefore, to believe in Him and cling to Him, eagerly waiting for His return. Because He will confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the Day of our LORD Jesus Christ. God is faithful. Let your confidence be in Him. **IJ'N, Amen. SDG**