

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, March 26, 2024
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“A Day Full of Traps”

READINGS: Luke 20:20-26 – Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. So the spies questioned him: “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” He saw through their duplicity and said to them, “Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. He said to them, “Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.”

Mark 12:32-34 – “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Tuesday of Holy Week has often been referred to as the Day of Inquisition. That day one delegation of Jesus’ opponents after another came to him with cleverly devised questions by which they hoped to trap him in an answer that would bring him into conflict with the Roman authorities or would offend the common people who were flocking around him. Either way they were hoping to move Jesus off the stage and out of their hair.

The problem they discovered was that none of their traps had any teeth. Jesus out-thought and out-witted them at every turn. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the Elders and Teachers of the Law all sent their brightest and best, and one by one each delegation slunk away after being publicly humiliated by the Savior. He saw through their schemes. He knew the Scriptures and human nature better than anyone there. He knew what they were trying to do and why. Not one could best him or embarrass him. Even before the Sanhedrin on Thursday night/Friday morning, they could find nothing with which to charge him. If he spoke to them at all, his humility and his wisdom prevailed.

It was not until the moment when the High Priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then they went ballistic! Then they roared in anger! Then the leaders gave a sigh of relief...they had him now! Their trap had been sprung, and they had caught their man. Or so they thought.

Jesus was not the victim of a clever oath. Jesus was not a helpless victim caught up in his own words and now charged with blasphemy. Remember always that Jesus is not your classic victim in all of this. Jesus chose those words with complete understanding. He knew the Father’s will, and he had said in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.” Three times he asked the Father to take the cup from him, but after the third time, he filled his heart with obedience and resolve. The Cross was the only way God’s wrath at sin could be turned away from the sinners. Jesus is not the victim; he is the Redeemer, giving himself into death so that we his disciples could have life!

Our cultural elites often try to do the same kind of thing to Jesus’ followers today. With carefully crafted allusions and outright lies, they try to paint faithful Christians as homophobes, reactionaries, haters, and

racists. While any Christian who allows him or herself to actually fall into those categories brings disrepute on Christ, the majority of Christians do not rate any of those terms. We simply speak the truth as God has spoken the truth. We try to love others and treat all people with respect. They are loved by Jesus, same as us. He died for each one of them, too. We simply stand upon the same word Jesus stood upon, and we trust that in the end God himself will justify us and bring us home. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

This is Holy Week so there will be services on Maundy Thursday (w/Communion) and Good Friday at 7:00 P.M. Easter morning services at 6:30, 8:00, and 10:30, all with Communion. Join us as we walk with Jesus on the Way of Tears, see him hanging on the accursed tree, and watch the stone rolled away from an empty Tomb. We'll get to sing "Alleluias" again! There's even an Easter Breakfast from 7:30-9:30. Come and rejoice!