

Sunday, February 21, 2016

Hebrews 1:1-14

Philippians 3:17 to 4:1

Luke 13:31-35

Jesus is Greater... than our Sacrifice

“Jesus is the greatest”- state those who are new to faith and also those who have had their faith tested and tried throughout their lives. But why? Why is the name of Jesus so important in our lives and a part of our faith? Throughout the Bible Jesus is presented as greater than all who ever lived before Him and all who will ever come behind Him. Colossians 1 emphatically states the doctrine of the supremacy of Christ “in everything” and that “God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.” But what makes him so great? How do we as faithful followers of the Christ, the Promised One know him and grow to understand how great Jesus really is?

As we enter this Lenten season we will focus on Jesus being greater than all that was and is and is to come and we will break this down each week using passages from the book of Hebrews. Our passage today from Hebrews 1 is a thesis statement of what the writer wants people to understand about Jesus’ greatness of the Son of God who became man. We are to depend on Christ alone because Jesus is the full revelation of God to humanity. This summary statement tells us that Jesus is “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being.” And after his death and resurrection, Jesus is the One who sits at the right hand of God- our creator in heaven. In this Lenten journey, it is my intention that we put Jesus in proper focus, recognizing that we can only truly follow him when we acknowledge that he is greater than everything and everyone in our lives.

Jesus is greater than.... There are different approaches to this statement but one we must keep in mind is that Jesus is one face of the Trinity- for Jesus is God, and so is the Spirit. Jesus is the One who became human for the sake of people needing someone to be their example and who to follow. According to the writer of Hebrews Jesus radiates God’s glory as his light shines in the darkness. Jesus was God on earth and is at God’s right hand as the Spirit

guides and leads us now. Jesus is God who became flesh—which is what we celebrate at Christmas but we cannot leave Jesus as the cute baby in the manger, for he now occupies the position of authority at the right hand of God the Father. And this is because Jesus was both human and divine, we lift up Jesus as the greatest because he changed the course of human history through his death—and resurrection. No other human did this before, or since. Jesus is God's Son and is worthy of all praise. But we need to understand Jesus for who he is.

A little boy was sitting talking to his aunt about life's deep questions. I don't get it. Why would God send his Son, Jesus to earth only to let him die. "

The aunt not really sure what to say says, "Because God loves us."

The boy still frustrated declares, "But didn't Jesus have a say in the matter, didn't they have a family meeting about this before this took place? At least my parents ask me about what I think and I have input. But why would Jesus agree to this?"

The aunt just responded, "God is Jesus, and Jesus is the greatest and he knew he would live and die."

The little boy then said, "But why doesn't everyone believe in Jesus as the greatest gift from God we could possibly receive—through him I'm going to heaven and be with God forever." The aunt was smiling proudly and simply stated, "because they just don't trust God who would love us so much to give us Jesus to die for our sakes." They just don't trust God.

Our reading from Luke 13 begins with a discussion between Jesus and some Pharisees who were afraid for his life if he kept helping people. Jesus tells them that he will continue to heal people and do what God has called him to do. He states that no prophet will die outside of Jerusalem" He knows that this is where the governors and leaders of the state and religious bodies are and that this is where he will die. It is then that he cries out and prays for this holy city because there are so many people in need of his care, love and compassion and he wants to protect them but there are too many people who are not willing to listen to him about loving others. He then tells the Pharisees that he will not be seen until the time comes for his

triumphant entry and the week of his passion begins. How humbling and wonderful, how great is Jesus?

“Jesus is greater” is a phrase that other forces want to change to less than. Other world religions reduce him to a prophet, a teacher, a miracle worker who was lifted up by the disciples to have him be like a god and not recognized as God’s Son. Jesus is the one who sacrificed himself and in this act alone we receive the gift of forgiveness and reconciliation with God-. Through his death and self-giving act of love, Jesus alone made our gifts to God worthwhile.

In Lent we often reflect upon what we are giving up as actions of sacrifice in order to grow in faith. And whether we give up something or not, no matter what we say we will do, nothing compares to what Jesus did for us. Jesus is greater than our sacrifice all we need to do is to give thanks to Jesus for his life, death and resurrection. And we are to live following his example- with love and compassion and caring. Jesus’ sacrifice is greater than anything ever offered by priests and church leaders of old because Jesus died for our sake so that we would be able to connect / reconnect/ reconcile with God the Father and live according to his way. We must however believe that Jesus’ death on the cross was for us you and me. And in response we share his story with others. Even though there are many who do not believe and live as enemies of the cross of Christ we who do believe know that our citizenship is in heaven. And we believe that Jesus is the greatest because it will be Jesus who will transform us so that we might live forever with him.

In this season of Lent, how will you put Jesus first? How will you grow in your faith as you search for Jesus and come to understand how great He is? For most people we grow in faith by praying to God through Jesus and inviting the spirit to speak to our hearts and minds so that we will understand that Jesus is greater than all creation for he was with the Father at the time of creation; and he was supreme when he calmed the raging storm. All things have been created through him and for him (Col.1:16) for Jesus is God made flesh.”

Let us pray: Holy God, we praise you for your gift to us in your Son Jesus. Help us to understand the depth of your love for us as we walk this Lenten journey learning about Jesus. Show us His greatness and enable us to live following his teachings and example of compassion. We ask this as we share with you these prayers from our hearts. SILENCE>. Amen.