

Sermon 9-30-18  
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## Wasting Ourselves on Jesus

The first sermon of the new pastor got rave reviews. It was on the power of Christian love. The next Sunday the pastor preached the exact same sermon. Everybody agreed that it was probably worth hearing twice. The next Sunday he again preached the same sermon on Christian love. Well, this had the whole place abuzz. So after service the pastor was asked to have a private meeting with the church council. At the meeting the president of the congregation asked the pastor, "Are you aware that you've preached the same sermon on Christian love for the last three weeks." The pastor replied, "Yes. I am. And when everyone's learned what's contained in that sermon about love I'll move on to the next thing."

So before we move on to something else, I will again teach on an all-important subject – the headship of Jesus Christ. Years ago we had a little byline on our church stationary that read, Trinity Lutheran Church, where the headship of Jesus Christ is firmly established. Sad to say, we've never come anywhere near achieving that goal. And if we were to use that byline today probably no one would know what it means anyway. So let's explore the mystery of what it might mean.

Two Sunday ago we examined Ephesians 1:22-23, "22 And God placed all things under his [Christ's] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." And, Colossians 1:18, "And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church. . ."

Is Yahweh, God Almighty, head of the universe? Is He in charge of *His* universe. Most assuredly. Right now everything holds together by His mighty will, purpose and power. Right now your physical needs are being met by His air, His water, His food, His clothing and shelter. Right now, you exist by His very Word. We, and everything that exists, would instantly drop into absolute nothingness if, without warning, Yahweh were to withdraw His will, purpose and power.

Therefore, when you get up in the morning, do you thank Yahweh that He is head of His universe and has kept you safe through the night? Do you thank Him for everything He has provided in the new day? Not doing so at best is a sign of ingratitude, and at worst is a sign of wicked unbelief. Yahweh is head of His universe!

Now, as Almighty God, we would expect Jesus Christ to be head of the universe. Right? No big deal. But it's a very big deal that a man, the God-man, Jesus Christ, is head of God's universe. For, that's what Adam, the first man, was created to be – the righteous head over everything that God had created. That Adam disobeyed and rejected his headship is the greatest catastrophe that has ever befallen the human race. It's the source of every evil, every catastrophe and of death itself.

On the other hand, that Jesus fully obeyed and has received the headship of the human race in Adam's place is the greatest event of human history. It is the source

of the greatest hope and expectation on planet earth. As we saw last week we live in expectation of what is written in Hebrews 12:22-24, “22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant....” We saw what is written in Revelation 21:2-5, “2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ 5 He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” This is the ultimate destiny to which Jesus, the head of all things, desires to lead His body, the church.

This reality of Jesus’ headship over all things is proven by the historical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ attested to in Holy Scripture. In addition it is proven by the very existence of the church itself. Jesus said just prior to ascending into heaven in Matthew 28:18, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” This means He is head over everything. He then said in Matthew 28:19-20, “19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” This means that the very existence of Christ’s church on earth is living evidence of Jesus’ authority over all things.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century Communists did everything in their power to stamp out Christianity in Russia and all the other communist lands. More Christians were murdered behind the iron curtain than in all the rest of history. After 70 years of communism Russia was in effect an atheist nation. Yet, here 27 years after the fall of communism in Russia the president of that land is doing everything in his power to increase the allegiance of his people to Jesus Christ through the Russian Orthodox Church.

On the other hand, Mr. Xi Jinping’s vigorous new efforts against Christianity in Communist China will no doubt bring the church’s growth to a halt for a while. But Jesus Christ knows what He is doing. Eventually, the Chinese church will emerge from this persecution larger than when it entered. It did the last time the communists clamped down in China. Will they never learn that you can’t beat God?

Just this past week there was an interesting item in the news. It seems that the government of Denmark, an historically Lutheran country, has ordered its state media channel, the Danish equivalent of the BBC, to begin emphasizing the role of Christianity in Danish culture. This is quite remarkable after Christianity’s eclipse in most of Western Europe. Jesus is both the human and divine head of God’s universe. He will never fail. He can never fail.

Therefore, we and all other believers are most privileged to have the blessed mantle of Messiah’s headship spread over us. By the power and authority Jesus earned in His obedient suffering, death and resurrection He will carry all who have embraced Him by faith across this life’s finish line and into the waiting arms of our

heavenly Father. As it says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Without Christ's righteousness no one can become God's child.

Now, as it says in Ephesians 1:22-23, Jesus is head over all things. But it also says that He is head over all things for the church which is His body – His body. To the extent that we recognize ourselves as Jesus' actual body here at Trinity, so can we be lead by our head.

This is why we now turn to a most important passage found in Romans 12:1-2, "1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."

What's a sacrifice? It's taking something most valuable – and here I'm going to use a bizarre concept: sacrifice is wasting something most valuable – wasting it on God.

In the gospels there is a narrative where a woman takes a bottle of perfume worth a whole year's salary and pours it over Jesus head. Everyone present is aghast. It's Passover. Therefore, they argue that the perfume should have been sold and the money used as a good work to help the poor. In effect, they were accusing the woman of wasting the perfume on Jesus.

We read in Mark 14:6-9, "6 'Leave her alone,' said Jesus. 'Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9 I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.'"

Jesus knew that He was going to make the greatest sacrifice of all. He was going to take His sinless body and waste it before God on your sin and mine and the sin of all humanity for all time. The bludgeoning, the lashing, the crown of thorns, the nails, the nerve wrenching contortion of a human body on a cross, all of it would be poured out before God in payment for sin. Therefore, Yahweh took what is most valuable of all to Him, His only begotten Son, and utterly wasted Him on us undeserving wicked, rebellious wretches. Indeed, the fact that we crucified God's Son shows the depth of our depraved wickedness.

God Almighty wasted His Son on us for a definite reason. In spite of our rebellion He considered us worth the price. He considered our redemption worth the price of His only begotten. This is absolute Amazing Grace.

Only in light of God's sacrifice does the sacrifice of that woman make sense. She didn't know it yet, but she was wasting a whole year's salary on the One who would utterly sacrifice Himself for her. No doubt, the Holy Spirit gave her an inkling that there was something about Jesus. That's why she did it. But she wouldn't know the full depth of Jesus' love until Easter Sunday.

So, if Jesus wasted Himself on us, is it appropriate for us to waste ourselves on Him? Most assuredly, yes! That's what Paul means when he writes in Romans 12:1,

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God....”

But here we notice something odd. Our bodies are anything but holy. Indeed, sin resides within the rebellious flesh we inherit from Adam and Eve. How, then, can we offer our bodies to God as holy and pleasing? In truth we can't.

However, with God all things are possible. Jesus wasting Himself on us made even our sinful bodies holy before God. Don't doubt it. For, this is a thing that God clearly sees and has announced to us in His Word. As we saw last week in Ephesians 5:25-27, “25... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” We are to receive this Word and believe it. We are to put faith in our baptism into Jesus Christ. In Christ, baptism has made even our bodies holy to God.

Therefore, since Jesus Christ has justified our lives and made us holy in God's sight by His sacrifice, so we take what He has made holy – even our bodies, our lives – and waste them back on Jesus. This is what Romans 12:1 means.

And let's complete the initial thought. Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”

Wasting our washed, made holy bodies on Jesus is our spiritual act of worship. Don't think for a moment that the deepest awe-filled reverence, the wildest frenzy of singing and shouting or anything in between is worship, unless Jesus first has all of you, until you have wasted yourself on Him.

ALL – that's the kind of sacrifice Jesus made. He sacrificed all. Right? Therefore, by faith, do you not possess all of Him – ALL of Him, everything He's got? You most surely do. It was all given up for you on the cross.

Consequently, let's immediately go to the third tier of faith. “Jesus, You gave up everything, even your place at God's right hand, for me.” “In return I take this sinful body that You yourself have washed and made holy and I waste it on you.”

Now, this is not as difficult as it may sound. For by wasting ourselves on Jesus we don't cease to be what we already are in this world – mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, children, brothers, sisters, workers, citizens, people of a thousand different talents and abilities, members of Christ's Church. None of this changes.

What does change is how we fulfill all our earthly relationships and duties, even the most intimate ones. Whatever we do, we do it in sacrifice for the Jesus Christ who gave Himself in sacrifice for us. This is what it means to be a living sacrifice. This is what spiritual worship is. Thus, the worship we give God in this sanctuary is only an outgrowth of the worship we already give Jesus by serving Him in everything we do. And if our worship here is not an outgrowth of a sacrificed life, it's really no worship at all.

There's one last thing. In case you missed it, there's a great benefit in wasting yourself on Jesus. Listen again to Romans 12:2, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Wasting ourselves on Jesus breaks us free from the wicked, ungodly patterns

of thought and behavior that our sinful nature brings us to in this world. As a result, we finally get to know what the will of God is for us through faith in His Word.

Look at the benefits, then, that sacrificing ourselves under the headship of Jesus as His body brings us – real spiritual worship, purpose in life, freedom from the total power of sin, and security in knowing what God’s will truly is. This is what the sacrifice of Jesus has gained for us. What miraculous blessings! Will you have them this day? If so, let us offer our bodies here and in this time as living sacrifices to Jesus our head that we might truly be His body, His beloved church, and might truly have Him as our beloved head. Amen.

All Bible quotes are from the NIV.