

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Trinity Sunday, June 4, 2023

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 237, 238:1-2, 248, 243, 244:1-2.

Lessons: 1 Kings 18:16-40, 1 Corinthians 10:14-23, Matthew 4:1-11.

Sermon Text: Matthew 4:10b (KJV)

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

Matthew 4:10 (KJV)

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Most people “believe in” something. The believer in Jesus Christ confesses publicly in our worship services that he believes in God. But the God that the Christian confesses isn’t just any old being.

And, unfortunately, not everyone believes in that God.

From nature we can learn that the true God is eternal, powerful, wise, and divine. We use words like omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent. From our conscience we can learn that the true God punishes sin. From the Bible and only from the Bible we learn that the true God saves.

He is the one who plainly identifies himself as ***“the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”*** (Matthew 28:19)

When it comes to believing in something, we ask

CAN YOUR god DO THESE THINGS?

- 1. My GOD has created me and preserves me.**
- 2. My GOD has redeemed me from death and hell.**
- 3. My GOD has called me to faith and forgives all my wickedness.**

We begin with the fact that people believe in different gods. The Bible teaches us that there is one true God. Worshipping anyone or anything instead of the true God and not fearing, loving, and trusting in the true God is idolatry.

The first of the true God’s Ten Commandments demands ***“You shall have no other gods. What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”***

Give all glory to God above anyone or anything else. Jesus even said: ***“Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”*** Matthew 4:10 (NIV)

We read in Exodus chapter 20 where God gives us the Commandments: ***“You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”*** Exodus 20:3-6 (NIV) Those commands are repeated many times in Scripture: ***“Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold.”*** Exodus 20:23 (NIV2011) ***“Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the LORD your God.”*** Leviticus 19:4 (NIV) ***“Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the LORD your God.”*** Leviticus 26:1 (NIV)

The Word of God makes it clear that idolaters are included in ***“the wicked [who] will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*** 1 Corinthians 6:9 (NIV)

The first thing many people think about when they think of false gods is some kind of statue, or some kind of supernatural being.

Even Christian children often think of some kind of statue when they first learn this commandment. But as we grow older, we realize that this commandment forbids every kind of idolatry. Idolatry occurs when someone or something takes first place in a heart instead of the true God.

Open idolatry is giving glory to any idols as their god as well as trying to give glory to the Father without also giving equal glory to Jesus.

Secret idolatry occurs when anyone or anything takes first place in the heart instead of the true God.

In the church year calendar, today is Trinity Sunday, a Sunday to review what the Bible teaches about the triune God. Today we make a comparison between what the true God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost does and what no other ‘gods’ can do.

As Christians, you have learned who the true God is.

But since we Christians are surrounded by people who do not honor, do not worship, do not serve, do not obey, and have no use for the true God, we need to be certain of what our God can do and has done.

In our Old Testament lesson, you heard about God’s prophet Elijah in a showdown between the true God and Baal, the false god of the Canaanites. When Baal could not send fire to burn the sacrifice they had prepared with wood on an altar, Elijah mocked the 450 priests of Baal. ***“At noon Elijah began to taunt them. ‘Shout louder!’ he said. ‘Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.’ So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.”*** 1 Kings 18:27-29 (NIV)

Baal was a god of the Canaanites, the people whose land God commanded his people to conquer and to destroy. This destruction included getting rid of all traces of the false gods. But some Israelites worshipped Baal. In the days of Ahab, king of Israel’s Northern Kingdom, we read that ***“Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him. ... he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.”*** 1 Kings 16:30-33 (NIV) Then two chapters later we read of Elijah’s confrontation with the prophets of Baal.

Today in our country, by the grace of God, there is no universal command to worship a false god. But false gods are all around us. Anything or anyone that is honored, praised, takes the place of or is worshipped more than the true God is an idol. And anyone who worships, honors, glorifies, serves or obeys anyone or any thing more than the true God is guilty of the sin of idolatry.

So what can the true God do that no false god can? Let’s look at words of the Apostles Creed and Martin Luther’s explanation of that creed.

First we look at God the Father, true God, who created all things through his word. He made everything out of nothing. He simply said “Let there be” and “there was”. Nothing came about by random chance.

Everything, from the tiniest part of a cell to the greatest, most distant stars was created by the true God. We can easily be puzzled by some reports of galaxies, stars, and planets “far, far away” and wonder about the discoveries of men with their expensive high-powered telescopes. But we read in Genesis ***“And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.’ And it was so.”*** Genesis 1:14-15 (NIV)

And even when we examine and ponder human discoveries of scientific elements and the tiniest living things that God created we are amazed that anyone could imagine such remarkable organisms simply evolved.

There are some truly marvelous things and events and pieces of creation! We believe in an all-powerful omniscient creator God, not random chance. And we simply confess that God “created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities.”

And it is our true God who preserves us. He is responsible for providing “all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life.” It is not merely human strength, know-how and skills that provide all – everything – we need!

God, the true God also preserves us from day to day, “defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil.”

But this God who created, preserves and protects me has something even greater than this world he created for me.

He has prepared a way for me to enjoy life forever. Jesus said ***“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”*** John 10:10 (KJV)

My God redeemed me!

You see, ever since the first two human beings God created disobeyed the one command given in Scripture for them, God, our true God, had a plan to redeem, to rescue, to save all of mankind, all of Adam and Eve’s descendants from the sin, the death, the eternal damnation they had chosen instead of complete love and obedience to the God who had created them and provided a perfect place for them to live in the Garden of Eden.

God did this by sending someone to perfectly fulfill and obey every command, every law of God and to live a sinless life. No man, no mere human could obey perfectly what God, the perfect God, had demanded of all men. He sent his only-begotten Son to become a true man while also remaining completely true God, a unique person, the one we call “the second person” of the triune God, the true God. This person of the true God, my God, redeemed me, “purchased and won 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.”

But my God has done more! The third person of the true Godhead has given me faith to believe all this! I could not “by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.”

The third person of the Triune God, the Holy Spirit, also called the Holy Ghost, has sanctified me, that is, he has “called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”

God has called me out of the unbelieving world to be his very own possession, his child, his follower, his disciple.

And the Holy Ghost has given me the most precious gift ever – the forgiveness of my sins. Without this gift I would remain a lost and condemned creature. With this gift I receive eternal life in heaven with my Savior, Jesus Christ.

This life on earth isn’t the end of it all. My God has something better waiting for me. “On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.”

All these things my God can and does do. And your question for anyone who doubts, who is skeptical, who does not believe as you do is **“CAN YOUR god DO THESE THINGS?”**

You have come to know, you have learned and have come to believe in the true God. For that you can only thank the true God.

So now what do you do with this good news, this gospel? You are to give it away. You are to share it. You are to teach it to everyone you know. And why does God do this? “All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.”

“All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him.” Amen.