

The Adjudication of Jesus

Isaiah 2:1-5

The First Sunday in Advent, November 28, 2010

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Jesus is risen from the dead! It may be an odd way to start Advent, but He is risen from the dead. That makes Him more important than anyone else. That fact raises Him up above every one else.

Perhaps some of you have been through this exercise before. Mohammed is not raised from the dead. Jesus is raised from the dead. Mohammed left us a bunch of prophecies in the Koran. Jesus left us a bunch of prophecies in the Bible. What makes the prophecies of Jesus superior to the prophecies of Mohammed? Jesus rose from the dead. The outcome of the life of Jesus is superior to the out come of the life of Mohammed.

The same thing could be said of Confucius. Confucius said a lot of wise and important things. They are things that help us live our lives. They are things that are true. Most of the quotes from Confucius that I remember in high school were all true and profound. Jesus also said profound things. Jesus also said important things. Jesus says things to help us live our lives. Confucius is not raised from the dead. Jesus is. The out come of the life of Jesus is superior to the out come of the life of Confucius. Therefore the wisdom of Jesus is superior to the wisdom of Confucius.

The same things could be said about Buddha. The same things could be said about the self help books that are in the book store. The same thing could be said of the people on television who try to help us live our lives. Do they say helpful things that will help us live our lives? Sure they do. And sometimes they say things that are wrong and unhelpful. Just because a person has been on television for many years does not necessarily make them right. One must consider the outcome of their way of life. The outcome of the way of life of Jesus was that He rose from the dead.

Jesus is therefore superior to anyone on the television no matter who they are or what they have accomplished or what they have given away. Jesus is superior to the other ancient theologians and philosophers and mystics who have managed to gain a following down through the centuries. He is superior because the out come of His life is superior. He rose from the dead. You want resurrection from the dead? Follow Jesus.

All of the nations stream to Jesus. Why wouldn't they? This streaming of the nations to Jesus may not happen in as dramatic or as obvious a fashion as we followers of Jesus would have liked, but it did happen. Sociologists point out that the Church grew in the Roman Empire at the same rate that all other societies grew in ancient times. That is true enough, but which society prevailed? The society that followed the One who rose from the dead prevailed. From our perspective we would say, eventually the nations got around to streaming to Him. They streamed to Him when they found out what He offered. They streamed to Him when they realized that He was superior to His surroundings.

And so the nations stream to Him. Europe streamed to Him. North America streamed to Him. South America streamed to Him. Now Africans are streaming to Jesus in numbers unlike any other place in the world. There are more Lutherans in Africa than there are in North America. There are more Christians in Africa than there are in North America. The United States the so called "Christian Nation" is far outmatched by our African brothers and sisters. And it seems to me that the Africans are more loyal to Him as a continent than we are.

The nations stream to Him. Even nations like China, India and Japan where the Church does not hold major sway and influence in the society has those people who are streaming to Jesus. They are coming.

The catechism is right in its explanation to the Second Petition, Thy Kingdom come. The Kingdom of come comes without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also. In other words the Kingdom of God is going to come whether we pray or not. God will make sure that it comes. In other words the Holy Spirit is going to be bringing people to faith in Jesus all over the world whether we ask Him to do so or not. The issue in the Lord's Prayer is whether or not we believe, whether or not we are one of the nations that stream to Jesus. If you want to be a nation that streams to Jesus pray, "Thy Kingdom come."

What are they doing when they go to Jesus? When all of the nations get to Jesus what are they doing? They are doing what the nations have always done when they went to Jesus. They are learning from Him. They want to learn the ways of Jesus. They want to walk in the paths of Jesus. Who wouldn't? The ways and the paths of Jesus lead to everlasting life. The nations are eager to know the secret of resurrection from the dead. They are eager to know the secret of eternal life. They are eager to learn the secret of the peace that passes all understanding. So they are going to Jesus and learning from Him. They listen to the words of Jesus.

The instruction of God goes forth from Jesus. When you listen to Jesus you are not listening to just any person, like when you are listening to Buddha or Mohammed or whomever. When you listen to Jesus you are listening to the word of God. The Word of God goes forth from Jesus. This is not some simple light instruction that you are receiving when you listen to Jesus. It is the words of God Himself. Therefore when Jesus judges, God is judging. When Jesus adjudicates, God adjudicates. That is what the nations find when they arrive at the feet of Jesus and listen to His teaching. They find the judgment of God. They find the adjudication of the Almighty.

Jesus adjudicates the people who come to Him. We have talked about this before. When Jesus forgives the paralyzed man or the woman that wept at His feet. He is delivering a judgment. He is adjudicating the case that God has against them. God has a case against the paralyzed man. We don't know what it is, but we know that there is one because He is paralyzed. If God did not have a case against the paralyzed man, He wouldn't be paralyzed. Without being over simplistic and there are other examples besides the paralyzed man like Job and others, Jesus adjudicates the paralyzed man's case. He tells the paralyzed man that his sins are forgiven. Jesus adjudicated the case and acquitted the paralyzed man. He did the same for the woman who wept at His feet. He did the same for Zacchaeus, etc. We are also familiar with Jesus' judgments of the Pharisees. He called them hypocrites, white washed tombs, clean on the outside, but on the inside filled with dead men's bones and everything unclean. He adjudicates the centurion, "Never even in Israel have I seen such faith." I could site example after example. He tells the rich young man, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give it to the poor, then come and follow Me and you will have treasure in heaven." Anyway, I could site example after example of Jesus adjudicating the cases that came before Him. He sat on the throne of His father David and He judged the cases that the people brought before Him. What the Roman centurion and the Syro Phoenician woman demonstrate is that what Isaiah prophesied had come to pass. The nations were coming to Jesus with their cases. He was judging them.

The end result of the judgment of Jesus is peace. Even the damnation that Jesus unleashed against the Pharisees brought peace. It may not have brought peace to the Pharisees, but it brought peace

between them and others. Jesus aimed at bringing peace between the Pharisees and God, but the Pharisees refused. That is why the prostitutes and the tax collectors entered the Kingdom of heaven before the Pharisees did.

For every nation who brings their case to Jesus for judgment the result is peace. Nation will not take up sword against nation. They will not learn war anymore. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

If I may speak politically for a moment: the reason that the Israelis and the Palestinians are still blowing each other up is that neither side has brought their case to Jesus for a decision. They either do not believe in Him or they are afraid of what He will say.

Some of the members of our congregation have seen the movie *Fireproof*. It tells the story of a married couple whose marriage is failing. He is angry at her, resentful that she diverts money away from where he wants to spend it to something that she wants. His anger drives her away from him. She is considering having an affair. He is looking at porn and divorce seems imminent. The father of the husband wants to see his son's marriage succeed so he drives to his son's home and takes him to a camp to walk around and discuss his personal problems. He listens to his son unload everything that his wife is doing to him that is unfair. He also tells his father about those things that he has done to try to make the marriage succeed but they have failed. The father coaches his son on confessing his sins to his wife. He doesn't call it that, but that is basically what he is doing. He coaches his son on forgiving his wife. The son is angry. "You are asking me to love her unconditionally without her giving anything back in return. That is not fair! Why should I live her unconditionally?" At this point on their walk in the camp they had entered an outdoor chapel where there was a large wooden cross set up. All the father had to do was stand next to that cross and simply look at his son. His son had gone to church and Sunday School when he was little. He knew what Jesus had done for him on that cross. He knew that Jesus did not get a good return on His sacrifice and yet He made the sacrifice anyway. He knew that Jesus laid aside the anger of God when He died upon the cross. He knew how hard it was for Jesus to let go of His anger. It cost Jesus His life to let go of His anger at sinners. He also knew that Jesus did it. He did it for him.

You can watch the film yourself. The marriage survived. He confessed his sins to his wife. No, it did not get better instantaneously, but it did get better. You understand what I am saying here. The couple brought their case before Jesus for adjudication and Jesus rendered His judgment. He did so through the vocation of the husband's father, but nevertheless it was the judgment of Jesus. When Jesus rendered His judgment the couple had peace.

The alternative is another movie called "*War of the Roses*." That marriage was also going bad, but instead of turning to Jesus for His judgments, the couple invented ways of harming each other. The hurt got worse and worse and it did not get better and there was no peace.

I use marriage as an illustration because it is a relationship that is precious to many of us. Some of us, however, are not married and I do not mean to imply that the judgments of Jesus are not for you either or that you cannot find peace in His judgments. This works between close friends. I myself can attest to that in my friendships. When Jesus renders His judgments between close friends there is peace between those friends. When the friends are not listening to the judgments of Jesus there is no peace. The same is true between people who work together. The same thing is true in families, among the cousins and the siblings. When siblings are listening to the judgments of Jesus there is peace. When they are not listening to the judgments of Jesus there is no peace. The same thing is true between nations. Isaiah prophesies the word of the Lord. If the United Nations truly wants there to be peace between her member states, then Jesus will have to adjudicate between the member states. When He does so, there will be peace. When He does so, there will be peace.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer rightly observed, "When there is sin between you and me, there is no peace. When Jesus is between you and me, there is peace."

They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation nor will they learn war ever again.

O come, house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.