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### **33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**First Reading:        Hebrews 10: 11-18**

And every priest stands day after day at their service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds," he also adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

**Gospel Reading:     Mark 13:1-8**

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birthpangs.

***1. Jesus is Lord – the love, humility and self-giving of Jesus make him Lord.***

This is the first of the five beliefs of Jan Hus Presbyterian Church, as stated in “What do we believe?”

So, what does it mean to say we believe this?

Well, it is what you think. It is about the Deity of Jesus, that is, about Jesus as God.

A week ago, I mentioned a friend of mine who once said from the pulpit, “I believe Jesus, I just don’t know if I believe in him.”

I found a variation of this, based on a work by Adolf van Harnack in *What is Christianity?* Published in 1957. Millard Erickson in reviewing his work in his own *Christian Theology*<sup>1</sup> says:

In looking at the biblical evidence for the deity of Christ, we begin with Jesus’ own self-consciousness. What did Jesus think and believe about himself? Some have argued that Jesus did not make any claim to be God. His message was entirely about the Father [sic], not about himself. We are therefore called to believe *with* Jesus, not *in* Jesus.

Erickson takes this further:

It is true that Jesus did not make any explicit and overt claims to deity. He did not say in so many words, “I am God.” What we do find, however, are claims that would be inappropriate if made by someone who is less than God.

In other words, don’t look at what is there. Look at what is missing.

And the Gospels are full of “what is missing.” Erickson mentions several examples, including:

- Jesus refers to sending *his* angels, which are also referred to as the “angels of God.”
- And there are the prerogatives that Jesus claimed. Mark 2:5 is an example of this, when paralytic is lowered through the temple ceiling. The first words Jesus states are, “Your sins are forgiven.” Immediately he is confronted by the scribes, who accuse him of blasphemy, since only God could forgive sins. Yet, there is Jesus forgiving...And Jesus did not take this opportunity, as he did not take others to clarify whether or not he was God, instead, he said to the scribes, “Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat, and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins...’ He said to the paralytic, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home.’”
- And there are others.

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<sup>1</sup> Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI. 1998.

What would it be like to have no doubt in the deity of Jesus? Maybe you have that in your hearts and will share it with us when we have a chance to talk in a little while.

What would it mean if our first belief out and out stated:

“Jesus is God [instead of Lord] – the love, humility, and self-giving of Jesus make him God.”?

Or is that what we are saying? Are we affirming the concept of “Lord” as God in a way that differentiates “Lord” from “lord,” and all the oppressive connotations of the latter?

And, if it is what we are saying, what relationship do we have with others and their beliefs?

Or are we stating something else, and, if so, what might that be?

Still, “Jesus is Lord...”

In both the Old Testament and New Testament, “Lord,” with a capitol L, means God.

Well, maybe not everyone agrees...haven’t found much anywhere that everyone agrees upon. Still...

The New Testament writers use the Greek word *kurios* – “Lord” to describe Jesus, especially in his risen and ascended state.<sup>2</sup> Additional evidence suggests that the deity of Jesus is calling him Lord, as in Lord God, based on the Septuagint’s translation – using *kurios* where *Jehovah* and *Adonai* appeared in the Hebrew text. *Jehovah* and *Adonai*, of course, are words for God.

Surely, the aspect of Jesus that most identifies him as God – or creates the most controversy about his being God is his Resurrection and Ascension.

Last night, I watched a segment of Rachel Maddow, interviewing Bill Nye, *The Science Guy* about the discovery of water in the polar regions of the moon. You may recall, NASA recently sent a space vehicle to the moon, with the express intent of crashing it into a region, thus sending up a plume of “moon stuff” that could be analyzed by other instruments to test for the presence of water – and they found it. What that will mean, we’ll see, but Nye commented about the importance of the experiment from another point of view.

He said, “Rachel, since humanity existed, we have had two basic questions that have driven us: “How did we get here? and Is anyone else out there?”

Do we believe that Jesus once and for all answered those questions? Are we created by God [how we got here] and is Jesus’ deity and ascension into heaven [a place of heaven] an answer to the latter, “Yes, someone else is out there. We are not alone”?

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Is that what Jesus is Lord means? Or something else...?

And, when we say that “the love, humility, and self-giving of Jesus make him Lord” we have more questions to tease apart?

What is the “love of Jesus”?

What is the “humility of Jesus”?

What is the “self-giving of Jesus”?

And how do those things come together to make him Lord?

If someone came in today, looked at our bulletin and asked you what this meant, whether you are a member, visitor, friend, or guest - what would you say?

And how might what you say be based on the readings that we publicly offered today in our worship service? Would there be alignment in your heart and mind that you could express?

Let’s look at Hebrews, first, which is one of the most direct sections of the Bible speaking of Jesus as God:

- But when Christ has offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, “he sat down at the right hand of God.”
- There he sits – at the right hand of God. (The hand of Yahweh that delivered Israel, the hand, in the Hebrew text, that is the most relied upon, and the one, according to the expression in the New Testament, reserved for Jesus.)

Further, and to me even more pronounced than the imagery of being seated at the right hand of God, is again the claim of forgiveness of sins, referred to earlier, this time in an all-encompassing way:

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds...I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

In other words the only sacrifice that might ever be needed for the forgiveness of sins has been made...Jesus.

Now, it is up to us, to the hearts and the minds of humanity to tune itself to this truth and the abundant forgiveness.

Is this what we mean by the love, humility, and self-giving of Jesus that makes him Lord?

I’ll bet Jesus knew just how “Star Trekkish” all this must have seemed. He must have known how many arguments were ahead, bickering, mistreatments of others, and worse – all because of what he was saying.

He must have known how far we had [have] gone awry, so much so that a message of “love, humility, and self-giving” was going to cause all sorts of trouble – for centuries. And he warned his disciples and those who would follow not to waver:

“Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, “I am he!” and they will lead many astray.”

For me, this is why I come to a community of worship and spirituality – so that I do not waver, even with all the questions. I still want the questions and, yes, the doubt connected to my faith – if that makes sense.

And I know God is here in many ways. All ways? Always? Yes.

So, for me, if you come here from a different tradition, no matter... Chances are your tradition has the same message of God, in its own way. “Do not to be led astray, do not digress too far, hope always to gain strength and courage in worshipping God, as you know God.

We will talk more about our relationship between religious traditions when we reach our fourth belief, which states: “Other traditions offer wisdom that we honor.”

In closing, most of us have been cared for by others who set us on our path of faith, in one way or another. In the Christian faith, many of us received Baptism as an infant. However, if as an adult, you were to be baptized or reaffirm your faith, you would likely be asked to profess your faith by reciting The Apostle’s Creed. In the creed, you would read the following:

“I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, Our Lord.”

There it is again. To this day, I ask myself the question, using our first belief to frame my thoughts:

With Jesus as Lord – and his love, humility, and self-giving that make him Lord – how does that make us different? How does that belief explain our hearts, mind, soul, and actions? And how does that make us Jan Hus Presbyterian Church and Neighborhood House?

Lord, help us to know.

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Next week...Belief #2.

### **What do we believe?**

At Jan Hus Presbyterian Church, we share the following beliefs:

1. Jesus is Lord - the love, humility and self-giving of Jesus make him Lord.
- 2. The Bible is for both personal and social transformation. We interpret scripture with imagination and courage, without rigid literalism.**
3. The church of Jesus stays close to the under-privileged peoples of this world and guards against self-righteousness and oppression.
4. Other religious traditions offer wisdom that we honor.
5. The victory belongs to Love; therefore, we are called to a lifestyle of hope, gratitude and service.

We are an inclusive church. At Jan Hus, we welcome people regardless of racial, ethnic, or economic background or sexual orientation into full participation of church life.

*“A Spiritual Home in the Real World”*