

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**First Sunday in Advent, November 27, 2016**

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

Hymns: 64, 343:1, 359, 364:1-5, 644.

Lessons: Isaiah 8:17-9:7, 2 Peter 1:1-21, Matthew 28:16-20.

Sermon Text: Romans 1:1-6

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Who is Jesus Christ and what did he do for you? I think you could simply answer that in just a few short words. Jesus Christ is true God and true man and he died on the cross for me. That is the simple answer. Today let's look at Jesus Christ in just a little more detail.

There is always more we can learn about Jesus Christ. We must find Jesus Christ in every book of the Bible. In his classic three-volume Christian Doctrine Franz Pieper wrote about 340 pages discussing Jesus Christ and what he did for you. Yet we are just going to spend a few short sermons on that subject, so there is really more to learn. Let's start with this:

**I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, GOD'S ONLY SON, OUR LORD**

- 1. Who is Jesus Christ?**
- 2. What did he do for you?**

Jesus Christ is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity. That is plain from the Scriptures that tell us *"We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true--even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life."* 1 John 5:20 (NIV) You may even remember passages from the Christmas Gospel which tell us *"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' – which means, 'God with us.'" Matthew 1:23 (NIV) And "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."* Luke 2:11 (KJV) Even Jesus' disciples while he was on earth were convinced that he was true God, for *"Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" Matthew 16:16 (NIV)*

Jesus Christ is also true man, born of the Virgin Mary. That, too, is a fact that I think most of you have known since you were very young. It is a truth that our children are going to remind us of at Christmas. *"And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."* Luke 2:12 (KJV) Paul is very clear when he tells us *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* 1 Timothy 2:5 (NIV) We read this in Hebrews about Jesus Christ: *"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil."* Hebrews 2:14 (NIV) Jesus Christ, God's Only-Begotten Son, was sent to earth to be born of a woman at God's right time: *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.: Galatians 4:4 (NIV) "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."* Matthew 1:22-23 (KJV)

It was necessary that he be both true God and true man in one person so that he could be under God's law and also keep it perfectly for me. This is called his "active obedience" because this is what Jesus Christ did. He actively, intentionally, and perfectly obeyed every one of God's commandments and laws. He fulfilled the law for us, in our place.

But it was also necessary that he must die and in that way ransom me by his death. This is called his “passive obedience”. So you see that he was punished for breaking God’s commandments and laws in our place. This vicarious atonement is called passive obedience because he passively and willingly suffered and died for the sins of someone else – you and me and all mankind.

So what did Jesus Christ do for you? As we just heard, he “died on the cross” for me. But that’s the simple answer. That’s the answer that your small children can tell you. You have had the opportunity since your children were born to teach them about Jesus Christ. When they start kindergarten we invite them to 45 minutes a week about 30 weeks out of the year to learn more about Jesus Christ. That’s not much if you are relying only on Sundays to teach your children about Jesus. Fathers especially are told: **“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”** Ephesians 6:4 (NIV) And of course, when mothers may spend so very much time with their children, they, too, are to teach them God’s will.

Well, how is this to be done? The Bible is an excellent place to start. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism is another excellent source to teach your children about who Jesus Christ is, and what God did for them. So what did God do for them – and for us – and for all mankind?

When God sent his only-begotten Son Jesus the Christ to earth, what were his duties? Theologians have traditionally spoken of his “office”, that is, his official duties and of his work. When we speak of his “office” we mean the right and duty to perform certain functions or official acts.

Jesus is the personal name, meaning “Savior”, given to him when **“the angel of the Lord”** spoke to Joseph who was pledged to be married to Mary, who was with child conceived by the Holy Ghost. The angel told him **“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”** Matthew 1:20-21 (NIV)

The other name given him in the Scriptures is “Christ”, or “the Christ”. This is the Greek New Testament word for the Hebrew Old Testament word “Messiah”, which both mean “the anointed one”. The fact that he was anointed by God for certain duties points to the “office”, or official duties of the Redeemer of mankind.

Scripture speaks of three “offices”, or functions, or roles Jesus was sent to fulfill.

If we today think of an office, we might think of a place in a building where someone works. That is not exactly what the Scriptures teach us about the office of Jesus Christ. Scripture speaks about Jesus Christ as being a Prophet, a Priest, and a King. One possible picture to help explain Jesus’ office and what is meant by his office is this way: think of a sign on the office door that tells you not only the name of the person who works there, but also some kind of a description of what they do there. In schools this may be the job titles for “principal” or “nurse”. Think also of a business card. What does a business card tell you? It tells you who the person is and it gives some kind of a job title about what he or she does. So if Jesus Christ had a business card, what would it tell you about his office? There should be three words or job titles: Prophet, Priest, and King.

Jesus Christ is a Prophet, the great Prophet. What does a prophet do? Well in the Old Testament, God’s prophets were anointed to tell people God’s Word, especially the good news about the coming Savior. Peter tells us: **“But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.”** Acts 3:18 (NIV)

As the Prophet anointed by God, Christ preached God’s Word, especially the good news of eternal life while he was on earth. Jesus quotes Isaiah when he says **“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.”** Isaiah 61:1 (NIV) And we read that **“Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him.”** Luke 8:1 (NIV)

The second part of Christ’s office, or official duties, is Priest. What did priests do in the Old Testament? They were anointed to represent the people before God and to offer sacrifices for the people’s sins. Scripture tells us of them that **“Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.”** Hebrews 5:1 (NIV)

As the great High Priest Jesus Christ represented the whole world before God and sacrificed himself for the sins of all humans. This was not just a sacrifice of some creature like a lamb or bull or goat. Christ offered the ultimate, ultimate sacrifice. We speak of someone dying for a cause today as giving the ultimate sacrifice. Yes Jesus died for a cause. But he did more. He died for someone else. He died for the sins of someone else because he was sinless. He died for all sins – for your sins, for my sins, and he died for all sins for all mankind. Isn't that quite an ultimate sacrifice? We read in Ephesians that ***“Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”*** Ephesians 5:2 (NIV) We read about Jesus that ***“Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.”*** Hebrews 7:26-27 (NIV) And John assures us that ***“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”*** 1 John 2:2 (NIV)

The third part of Christ's office, or official duties, is King. In the Old Testament, God's kings were anointed to rule the people and to protect them, to fight their battles. When the Israelites told Samuel they wanted a king, they said ***“Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.”*** 1 Samuel 8:20 (NIV)

As a king Jesus Christ won the victory over sin, death, and the devil so that he might rule in the hearts of believers by his Word. His kingdom is not an earthly kingdom, but he rules in the hearts of believers, as well as controlling all things in heaven and on earth. His victory is praised in this way: ***“Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** 1 Corinthians 15:56-57 (NIV) Paul writes to the Romans that ***“Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.”*** Romans 14:9 (NIV)

So there you have a summary of the office, the official duties of Jesus, the Christ, as my Prophet, Priest, and King.

It would be easy to think of Jesus' "office" as being the same thing as his work. But let's make a distinction. For his work we would use the word redemption. Jesus redeemed mankind from sin, death, and the power of the devil. We read in Colossians that God ***“has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*** Colossians 1:13-14 (NIV)

To redeem means to buy back, as to buy back a slave. Jesus had to buy us back, because we were slaves of death; we were slaves of Satan; we were slaves of sin. We had no choice. Think of someone in prison. That person has no choice but to be in prison. Then think of yourself. In simple terms you now have a choice to remain free, that is, to stay out of prison. You also have the choice to do something that will put you in prison. And once you are in prison how are you going to get out? You will need to be redeemed. Some price is going to have to be paid. That price may be months or years of your life spent in prison until you have paid the price for whatever crime you have committed.

But what if someone else could pay that price? Would you appreciate that? What if someone could pay whatever is required to get you out of prison? Would you be thankful for that?

Well, that's what Jesus Christ did – not to release you from an earthly prison, but ***“Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance -- now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”*** Hebrews 9:15 (NIV) Scripture is clear: ***“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”*** 1 Peter 1:18-19 (NIV) We also read: ***“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*** Matthew 20:28 (NIV)

We can only be grateful and thankful to God that he sent his Only-Begotten Son to become true man. We thank him that Christ is our Prophet, Priest and King, and that he has redeemed us! May we never forget that and continue to learn from God's Word about our Redeemer! Amen.