

## Solus Christus (Christ Alone)

By Vicar Jake Zabel

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Sermon text: Acts 4:1-13

<sup>1</sup>Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, <sup>2</sup>being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup>And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. <sup>4</sup>However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. <sup>5</sup>And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, <sup>6</sup>as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. <sup>7</sup>And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" <sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: <sup>9</sup>If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. <sup>11</sup>This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' <sup>12</sup>Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." <sup>13</sup>And when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Book of Concord: The Augsburg Confession XX.9-10

*Our people [the Lutheran teachers] have instructed the churches about faith in the following way: To begin with, they remind the churches that our works cannot reconcile God or merit grace and forgiveness of sins, but we obtain this by faith alone when we believe that we are received into grace on account of **Christ alone**, who has been appointed Mediator and atoning sacrifice through whom the Father is reconciled. Therefore, all who trust that they merit grace by works despise the merit and grace of Christ and seek a way to God without Christ through human powers, since Christ has said about Himself in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life."*

Lord sanctify us by your truth, your Word is truth. Amen.

There is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we can be saved, except the name of Jesus Christ. Christ alone is our Saviour and mediator. He alone is the way to salvation, He alone is the truth that sets us free, He alone is the life that grants eternal life. We are saved by Christ alone.

But what exactly does it mean to say that we are saved by Christ alone?

We know that there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, that is the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). We know the LORD our God is one (Deut. 6:4). We know that there is one God. That there is one Lord. That there is one Creator. That there is one Saviour.

As God Himself says, “There is no other God besides Me, a just God and Saviour, there is none besides me. Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the Earth. For I am God and there is no other” (Isa. 45:21-22).

As Christians we aren’t polytheists (many gods), we don’t believe in a pantheon of gods. We know that there is one God, and He alone is our Saviour.

Sure there are those New Age “Christians” who think that they can worship both Jesus and Buddha, or whichever other gods they so please. But we know that Jesus alone is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). That there are no other gods and no other saviours.

But is that all it means to be saved by Christ alone? Is a simple rejection of polytheism all that is meant by the phrase “Christ alone?”

As we approach Reformation 500, I have been preaching through the Solas, or the alones, of the Reformation. And for today’s sermon I will be explaining the full meaning of Solus Christus, that is Christ alone.

The Lutheran Reformers taught that we are justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. But when the Reformers said “Christ alone”, they were meaning far more than simply a confession of monotheism (one God).

The Lutheran Reformers were not responding to paganistic polytheism but to the Papist Roman Catholic doctrines that taught salvation not by Christ alone but salvation by Christ and the works of man.

The Lutherans teach that we are justified by Christ alone, but the opponents, the Roman Catholics, on the contrary, teach that God places our iniquities not on Christ alone but on our works (Apol. XX. 5). The Catholics teach that we merit the forgiveness of sins and grace through good works, and that we have access to God through our works apart from Christ the Propitiator (Apol. IV. 246). Thus they bury Christ so that people do not use Him as Mediator and on account of Him believe that they freely receive the forgiveness of sins (Apol. IV. 18). Just as the Sadducees and priests would not believe in the power of Christ to heal a lame man, so too the Catholics do not believe in the power of Christ to save us without our own good works.

In opposition to this erroneous doctrine the Lutherans teach that, “our works cannot reconcile God or merit grace and forgiveness of sins, but we obtain this by faith alone when we believe that we are received into grace on account of Christ alone, who has been appointed Mediator and atoning sacrifice through whom the Father is reconciled.

Therefore, all who trust that they merit grace by works despise the merit and grace of Christ and seek a way to God without Christ through human powers, since Christ has said about Himself in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth and the life.””

Instead of teaching Christ alone, the Catholics teach Christ and the works of man. And not only my works, but also the works of the Virgin Mary, the Saints and the Pope.

The Catholics destroy the doctrine of Christ alone, but adding to it the works of mankind. The Catholics have made the blessed Virgin Mary in a co-redemptress. The absolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Catholic Churches in German stated that, “The passion of our Lord Jesus, and the merits of the most Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints be to you the forgiveness of sins.” (AC XXI. 25) They have added the works of Mary and the saints to the work of Christ. They have replaced the pantheon of gods with a pantheon of saints.

Even though Mary is worthy of the highest honour, nevertheless the Catholics not only make her equal to Christ but instead they want us to look to her for our salvation. The fact of the matter is that the Virgin Mary has completely replaced Christ. People call upon her, trust in her mercy and seek mediation through her (AC XXI. 27-28).

The Lutherans, however, contend that we are justified by the merits of Christ alone, and not by the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary or any of the other saints. As Scripture says “each will receive the wages according to their own labour” (1 Cor. 3:8). One’s merit cannot be granted to another, just as the oil of the wise virgins could not be given to the foolish ones (Matt. 25:8-9) (AC XXI. 29-30). Only the sacrifice of Christ can be applied to others. There is no other sacrifice that can be merited to others outside of the one sacrifice of Christ on the Cross (Apol. XXIV.56). Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross was sufficient for the sins of the entire world, and there is no need for any additional sacrifices (Apol. XIII.8).

As the Lutherans taught, it cannot be demonstrated from Scripture that a person should call upon the saints or seek help from them, “for there is only one Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 2:5) (AC XXI.2).

On top of all this the Catholics look not to Christ alone, but to the Pope, to relics and to indulgences. Against these monstrous false doctrines Luther wrote his *Ninety-Five Theses*, which sparked the Reformation nearly 500 years ago. In these theses Luther attacked the erroneous doctrines of indulgences, through which the Papists taught they could grant salvation beyond that of Christ alone. As Luther said in theses 21 and 32, “those indulgence preachers are in error who say that man is absolved from every penalty and saved by papal indulgences,” “those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.”

The Catholics have destroyed the doctrine of Christ alone and utterly hidden Christ under the Virgin Mary, the Saints, the Pope, indulgences, relics and works.

And the Reformed theologians are no better. For among the non-Lutheran Protestants we find the Arminians, those whom the *Book of Concord* calls Synergists (working with) (FCSD II.77), who contend that man is not completely dead in spiritual matters. They teach that while the human will is too weak to initiate conversion, once it has been called then on the basis of its own free will it can meet God and contribute something to its salvation. They teach Decision Theology, that we have to choose God, that we have to accept His grace, that we have to make a decision for Christ. These theologians have turned faith into a work, and have turned Christ into nothing more than a ladder-builder. For the Arminians, which are found commonly among the Mega-Church theologians and Baptists, Christ simply built a ladder between Heaven and Earth and it is still up to us to climb that ladder.

The Lutherans declared that such a teaching is not compatible with sound teaching but is contrary to it (FCSD II.86). The view of Decision Theology is contrary to Scripture. Scripture shows on multiple occasions, that even after conversion, the human will is still in opposition to God, seeking to reject God. In Galatians 5:17 St. Paul writes, “the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” In Romans 7:19, 23, “the good that I will to do, I don’t do; the but evil I will not to do, that I do... I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.” And in 1 Peter 2:11 St. Peter warns us to abstain from fleshly lust “which war against the soul.”

The human can contribute nothing to salvation. Before conversion we were dead in our trespasses (Eph. 2:1, 5), slaves to sin (Rom. 6:6, 20), and enemies of God (Rom. 5:10). And even after conversion we still war against the Spirit.

It is against these synergistic errors of the Catholics and Reformed that the Lutherans proclaimed Christ alone. For these groups have added to salvation the works of man.

When Paul came to Corinth he preached nothing expected Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2).

Yet the Catholics and Reformed have preached Christ and the works of man, including the works of Mary, the Saints, the power of Pope, indulgences and relics, man’s Good Works and man’s decision for Christ.

The nature of man is sinful from conceptions (Ps. 51:5) and his thoughts are continually wicked (Gen. 6:5). Justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is not good enough for man. Man desires to be his own saviour; he strives to contribute something to his salvation, least he has to admit that he is a wholesomely

wicked creature that is unable of saving himself. Man refuses to admit that he is fallen and wicked, and thus seeks to contribute something to his salvation.

Jonathon Edwards, an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Puritan, once said that “you contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary.”

When it comes to salvation all we can do is sin against God and resist His grace. The only thing we can offer God is our sin. For it was our sin that nailed Jesus to the cross.

As Peter said, “you crucified Christ.”

This accusation was not directed solely at the Sadducees, Pharisees and priests but at all of us. Peter did not only blame those Jews who were physically responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, for at Pentecost Peter laid this same accusation against people who were not even present for the crucifixion (Acts 2:36). We may not be physically responsible for Jesus’ death but we are all spiritually responsible, for it was our sins that put Him on the cross. As Isaiah 53:6 says, “the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

We are all responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. Every single one of you here today crucified Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

But the Christ, whom you crucified, God raised from the dead. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. The stone which we, in our sin, have rejected has become the chief cornerstone. As Peter said on Pentecost, “the Jesus, whom you crucified, God has made both Lord and Christ.”

Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death upon the cross; therefore God exalted Him and gave Him the name above all names (Phil. 2:8-9). And it is this name alone that we have our salvation, for this Jesus Christ, whom you crucified, was delivered over for your transgression and raised for your justification (Rom. 4:25). Therefore, you who been baptised, have been buried with Christ through you baptism, that just as Christ was raised from the dead so you have been raised to walk in newness of life and to share in eternal life (Rom. 6:4). Now, you are no longer strangers or foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets and most importantly upon Jesus Christ Himself, the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-20).

Our hope is built on Christ alone. Our salvation is in Christ alone, for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel and the world, to all the Jews and the Gentiles, that the Jesus Christ, whom we crucified, was raised to life by God for our justification.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. He is the only mediator between God and mankind. He is the only name under Heaven but which we are saved. We are not

justified by Mary, or by Saints, or by Popes or relics, or indulgences or works. No! We are justified by Christ alone. This is what it means when we proclaim “Christ alone.”

Therefore, just as Peter and John preached to the Jews that there is salvation only in the name of Jesus, let us go out with this same boldness to proclaim to the world that we are justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Just as Luther and the other Reformers followed the example of the Apostles and with boldness proclaimed Christ alone, let us also follow their example.

Peter and John preached with such boldness because that had seen Christ and walked with Him. As for us, all who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27), all who have partaken of Holy Communion have touched Christ and received His body and His blood, all who hear the Word preached has heard the words of Christ. All who have come to Church have been with Jesus. Therefore, we can have the same boldness that the Apostles had. We can go out without fear and proclaim to all that they have been justified by Christ alone.

Therefore, go forth and preach nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Amen.

And may the God, who raised Jesus Christ of Nazareth from the dead, be with you always. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Almighty and everlasting God, since nothing is hidden before You, and since all hearts are laid bare before You, give us true humility, reverence, and repentance as we now come before Your throne of grace. Do not remember our many sins, but only Your kindness and constant love in Jesus Christ our Lord. We praise You for fulfilling Your eternal election of grace by sending Your Son Jesus Christ to shed His blood, the blood of the covenant, as our Saviour from sin. We praise You for giving us Your Holy Spirit to renew and help us day by day, to produce the results of Your grace.

Rule us by Your Holy Spirit that we may not give way to the evils of idolatry, sexual impurity, unbelief, and other great and shameful sins. Give us a living faith, which will enable us to stand firm at all times, and keep us from grumbling, doubt, or despair. Strengthen us whenever we are tempted, so that we may successfully resist Satan’s power.

Help us all to believe Your Word and to heed its warnings, so that we may always do what is right, and live in the faith that leads to eternal life. Increase our hope of seeing Your glory.

We thank You for Your countless blessings in our lives. Help us to use them faithfully and responsibly as good stewards of Your varied gifts, as people who are grateful for all Your love.

Bless Your Church, O Father, so that Your name may be hallowed and Your kingdom may come. Continue to lead Your people to Jesus Christ their rock, and

refresh them with the water of life. Equip Your people to proclaim Your truth with wisdom, love, and boldness, so that many more from all nations may call on Your name and be saved.

Convince the people in our country that righteousness makes a nation great, and that sin brings disgrace. Keep its people in Your care, so that honesty, uprightness, truth, and high moral principles may flourish, and all lawlessness, evil, and defiance of authority may be put down. Frustrate all plans to legalise same-sex unions. We ask Your special blessing on all who govern, that they may have wisdom to rule according to Your direction.

Guard and protect our homes. Unite parents in mutual love and godliness. Enable them to rule their children well and bring them up in truth and righteousness.

We pray for those who are sick in body, mind, or spirit, for all who are in any danger; for all who are experiencing worry, doubts, disappointments, or defeat. Help them in their troubles, and save them, for Your mercy's sake.

Heavenly Father, You did not even hold back Your Son, but gave Him up for us all; with Him freely give us all things and hear our prayers. And to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

### **10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

Job 38:4-18

<sup>4</sup> “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you know how to discern it! <sup>5</sup> Who determined its dimensions? Surely you know! Or who stretched a measuring line over it? <sup>6</sup> On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, <sup>7</sup> while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God were shouting for joy? <sup>8</sup> Who shut off the sea with doors when it burst from the womb and came out, <sup>9</sup> when I made clouds its garment and very thick cloud its infant-wrappings, <sup>10</sup> when I marked out My limits for it and set its bars and doors in place, <sup>11</sup> and when I said, ‘You may come as far as this but no farther, and here your proud waves will meet opposition?’ <sup>12</sup> Have you

given orders to the morning since your days began, and have you informed the dawn where its place is, <sup>13</sup> that it may take hold of the ends of the earth, and that wicked people may be shaken off from it? <sup>14</sup> The earth changes shape like clay under a seal, and its features appear as in a garment, <sup>15</sup> that the light of wicked people may be withheld, and that their raised arms may be broken. <sup>16</sup> Have you gone to the lowest limits of the sea, or walked in the deep places of the ocean? <sup>17</sup> Have the gates of death been shown to you, or can you see the gates of deep darkness? <sup>18</sup> Have you fully considered how broad the earth is? Tell me, if you know all about it!”

Romans 10:5-17

<sup>5</sup> For Moses writes about the righteousness that is by the Law, “The

person who has done these things will live by them.”<sup>6</sup> However, the righteousness that is by faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (which means, to bring Christ down)<sup>7</sup> or, “‘Who will descend into the depths?’” (which means, to bring Christ up from the dead).<sup>8</sup> Rather, what does it say? “The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.” This is the Word of faith, which we are preaching,<sup>9</sup> that if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.<sup>10</sup> For with the heart a person believes, so that he is counted righteous, and with the mouth a person confesses and then he is saved.<sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, “The person who believes in Him will not be put to shame.”<sup>12</sup> For there is no difference between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is over them all and gives His riches to all who call on Him.<sup>13</sup> For “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”<sup>14</sup> How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? Moreover, how are they to believe in Him of whom they have not heard? How are they to hear without a preacher?<sup>15</sup> How are they to preach unless they are sent? As Scripture has said: “How beautiful are the feet of those who tell good things as Good News!”<sup>16</sup> However, they have not all obeyed the Good News.

For Isaiah asks: “Lord, who has believed our message?”<sup>17</sup> Therefore faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.

Matthew 14:22-33

<sup>22</sup> Jesus immediately made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds.<sup>23</sup> After He had dismissed them, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone.<sup>24</sup> The boat was already a considerable distance from the shore, and was being buffeted by the waves, because there was a headwind.<sup>25</sup> During the fourth watch of the night Jesus came towards them, walking on the sea.

<sup>26</sup> When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified. They said, “It is a ghost!” and cried out in fear.

<sup>27</sup> Immediately Jesus spoke to them. “Take courage! It is I. Stop being afraid!”

<sup>28</sup> Peter answered Him, “Lord, if it is You, order me to come to You on the water!”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said, “Come!”

So Peter got down out of the boat, began to walk on the water, and went toward Jesus.<sup>30</sup> However, when he saw that the wind was strong, he was afraid; and, when he began to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

<sup>31</sup> Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him. He asked him,

“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

<sup>32</sup> When they came into the boat, the wind died down. <sup>33</sup> Those who were in the boat bowed down before Him, and said, “Truly, You are the Son of God.