

Jesus is God

During His earthly ministry Jesus demonstrated His power as God over the created world in His miracles. We see Jesus performing a miracle today in our Gospel Reading. To be sure, in the Bible we have a record of miracles that were performed by prophets in the Old Testament and apostles in the New Testament. But their miracles had one significant difference when compared with the miracles of Christ. All of their miracles were derivative in nature; that is, they were performed by the prophets and apostles as representatives of God, either by some specific command or impulse from God or in response to their prayers or in the name of Jesus (e.g., the miracles recorded throughout the book of Exodus, as well as those recorded in 1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 4-7; Luke 10:17; Acts 3:1-16; 5:1-16; 14:8-18). But Jesus' miracles were all performed at His own will and under His own authority. Notice, for example, the prayer of the leper in Mark 1. The leper acknowledges that Jesus has the power to take away the leprosy, if only Jesus wills it. Jesus responds, "I am willing... Be clean!" (Mark 1:40-42). Only God has such authority and the power to perform such works on His own authority.

Exactly the authority of Jesus as God was at issue when Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic mentioned in Mark 2:1-12. The authority to forgive sin ultimately belongs only to God. For sin is first and foremost an offense, a rebellion, against God. But Jesus forgave the man's sin and did so on His own authority. Precisely to prove that He is God and thus has the authority to forgive sin, Jesus healed the paralytic, likewise on His own authority.

Even in the matter of His own earthly life and death Jesus demonstrated His divine power. He declared that He would lay down His life of His own free will and then take it up again of His own volition (John 10:14-18). It might be easy enough for someone to make such a claim. Jesus however proved that this was no idle boast. When the officers came to arrest Him, it was not their power that prevailed but His (John 18:3-9). When He died on the cross, the moment of His death was of His own choosing (John 19:30). His rising from the dead proved that He had the power over life and death, that He was telling the truth when He said that He had power to lay down His life and then to take it up again. Most important, only God could claim that this work was sufficient to pay for the whole world's sin and guilt. He is the world's Saviour and He its final judge. And by it all He does what only God could do; as the Author of life He gives us eternal life (John 3:16; 5:19-30). In short, He is God-true, eternal, everlasting God - as His divine names declare and as His divine works demonstrate.

Because He has divine names, divine attributes, and divine works, He is entitled to the worship that is reserved for God alone. Those who do not worship Him do not worship God. In His earthly ministry He claimed such worship for Himself (John 5:23; 8:58) and demonstrated that He was entitled to it (Luke 9:18-36); both before and after His resurrection He accepted such worship (Matthew 14:33; 16:16; John 20:28). The mission of the church has been from the beginning a mission of proclaiming Christ as God and Saviour who is worthy of worship because of who He is and most blessedly because of what He has done for us and for our salvation. The very first sermon preached after the birth of the church on Pentecost was filled with references to Christ as God and Saviour (Acts 2:14-36). And the last book of the Bible proclaims that truth from beginning to end (Revelation 1:5-19; 22:7-21). Because He is God and Saviour, all owe Him worship. All of the epistles call us to the confession of the same truth, a truth so beautifully summed up by St. Paul in Philippians 2:10-11, when he tells us that "*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"