

Last week we talked about what it means to think and speak theologically.
We discussed why it is so important for us to understand what it is we believe about our faith,
as well as what we are able to say about God.
Of course words are limiting when it comes to speaking of the divine,
but,
seeing that God has created us,
we can say something.
Also,
last week I floated out a couple of theological terms that are essential to our faith,
and our understanding of who Jesus is.
Words like kenosis and theotokos,
both of which I would like to examine today...
not just as a theological exercise,
but also to see the practical implications for our own lives today.
With that in mind,
let us take a look at the Christological statement from the council of Chalcedon that can be found
in the back of your bulletin.
I would like us to read this together aloud...
(read statement).
The first thing we should look at is why was this statement even necessary?
After my sermon last week a couple of you approached me either in person or via email,
and asked some great questions.
If you remember,
I spoke about the term ‘kenosis’
which was from our epistle reading.
St. Paul told us that “Christ emptied himself (kenosis) of His divinity,
so that He might partake of our humanity.”
The question some of you asked,
was the same question the early church struggled with.
That question being,
“If Christ empties Himself of his divinity,
then doesn’t that mean that Christ is no longer God?”
Do you see the problem?
If we say that Christ is simply just a man,
and not God as well,
then it changes who Christ is,
and what He has done.
For example,
in the early church,
there were different groups arguing that Christ wasn’t fully God,
but rather He was adopted by God.
They believed that God in His mercy adopted this good man from Nazareth,

and made Him His son at His baptism.
Those who said Jesus was adopted by God,
believed that Jesus did really die on the cross,
and that He was resurrected,
but not because He was God,
but rather because of the good-life he lived.
On the surface this may not seem too troublesome.
In fact,
those practicing the Jewish and Muslim faiths both hold similar views,
in that they don't believe Jesus was God,
but instead was a good moral prophet.
So what's the matter with that?
Well,
our Old Testament reading this morning is what is the matter with that.
The Ten commandments,
also known as the Law,
were the divine commands given to Moses from God.
The Law was established to illustrate to the people of Israel,
what it meant to live in relationship with God,
and what were the parameters of being in said relationship.
Think about some of the laws here in our own country.
Whether it be traffic laws,
or business laws or whatever,
those laws have been instituted so that we might all be able to co-exist.
If someone breaks these laws,
the thought is that it somehow effects the relationship with the rest of the community.
So,
the Ten Commandments,
or the Law,
show us how to remain in a good relationship with God.
The problem however,
is that each of us at one time or another has broken one of God's laws.
Now some of you may look at the ten commandments and say,
why I have never done any of those,
Yes you have.
Maybe you didn't kill someone,
but have you ever thought maliciousness towards another human being?
If the answer is yes,
than you have broken one of the ten commandments.
Have you ever gossiped about someone?
Than you have broken the ten commandments.
Maybe you haven't committed adultery,

but have you ever looked at another person and thought,
hmmm,
I wonder what it would be like to have relations with them,
guess what,
you have broken the ten commandments.
The point is,
we all have broken the ten commandments.
As the bible tells us,
“no one is righteous, no not one,”
and
“All have fallen short of the Glory of God.”
So back to our question about the divinity of Christ.
If Christ was simply a good moral teacher or prophet,
and not God,
than He is no different than you or I.
He is just like anyone of us;
with the ability to struggle with sinning and temptations that we do,
but yet without the divinity to aid Him.
And His death on the cross,
well,
instead of it being an event that rescues all of humanity,
it becomes nearly just a tragedy.
So then,
what did St. Paul mean by “Christ emptied Himself of His divinity?”
Have you ever seen the reality show,
Undercover Boss?
For those of you who haven’t let me try to explain.
Each episode features a high-ranking executive or the owner of a corporation going undercover
as an entry-level employee in their own company.
The executives alter their appearance and assume an alias and fictional back-story.
The fictitious explanation given for the accompanying camera crew is that the executives are
being filmed as part of a documentary about entry-level workers in a particular industry,
or a competition with another individual with the winner getting a job with the company.
They spend approximately one week undercover,
working in various areas of their company operations,
with a different job and in most cases a different location each day.
They are exposed to a series of predicaments with amusing results,
and invariably spend time getting to know the people who work in the company,
learning about their professional and personal challenges.
At the end of their week undercover,
the executives return to their true identity and request the employees they worked with
individually to corporate headquarters.

The bosses reveal their identity,
and reward hard-working employees through campaign, promotion, or financial rewards,
while other employees are given training or better working conditions.
Now remember this is simply a metaphor I am using to illustrate kenosis,
it does fail at the end to convey kenosis,
but it helps.

God,
like the undercover boss,
takes on the same position as one of the employees,
or in this case,
as His creation.
He does this by “emptying” himself of his divine position,
just like for the short period of time the boss lowers his position on the tv show.
Now the boss is still “the boss”
just like Christ,
is still God.

But,
just like the boss took on the position of one of their employees,
Christ took on our position as a human,
in flesh and blood.

So Christ remains totally divine,
but yet fully human at the same time.

The undercover boss for that short period of time for all intensive purposes is one of the
employees,
but they are still the boss at the same time.

Christ was in fact full human,
but yet,
was fully divine.

What is meant by Christ emptying himself of his divinity,
is that God has subjected Himself to the limitations of the material world for a short period of
time.

And He has done this so that we might be more like Him.

His death on the cross,
redeems our Humanity because of His divinity.

For the 33 years that Christ lived on earth,
He partook of the same things that you and I did.
He felt hunger, pain, sleepiness etc.

We will talk more about this next week when we look at the term ‘theotokos.’

So what does this have to do with the ten commandments.

Well,

if we are called to live according to the ten commandments,
but yet because of our sinfulness we are unable to do so,

than we have what we like to call a problem.
Because we are required to live according to the Law,
but since we are not perfect because only God is perfect,
than we need some help in order to live up to the standards which God has presented.
And that help,
comes from God taking on the same form as His beloved creation.
St. John in His gospel said,
“God so loved the world,
that He gave His only begotten son,
so that they might all be saved.”
God humbled himself,
took on our humanity,
so that we could have life and life more abundantly.
This is why it was so important to the church in the 5th century to declare what it believed about
who Christ is.
We must never forget,
that our theology is not just an abstraction,
but rather a tool to help us have greater intimacy with God.
If you are this week and you have never experienced living a more abundant life,
I encourage you as we come forward to receive Holy Communion today,
that you ask God to come and rescue you,
and show you what it means to exist in the Glory of God and in His love.
Amen.