

“THE UNPARALLELED UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard
First Christian Reformed Church
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Sermon Texts: Luke 1:35; 2:10-11; John 1:14; Galatians 4:4-5
Belgic Confession: Article 19

Introduction.

From the beginning of time man has been in search of God. Man has looked for ways or paths to get to God. But no satisfactory way has been found. There have been thousands of attempts, but none of them have opened the door to heaven. As the saying goes, “You can’t get there from here.”

But God Himself has opened the door and shown the way. From the beginning Christianity has been called The Way.

John 14:6-7 Jesus said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7* If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.”

Hebrews 10:19-20 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, *20 by the new and living way* that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.

I Timothy 3:16 Great indeed ... is the mystery of godliness; He was manifested in the flesh.

It’s a mystery, but it’s a true mystery.

At Christmas this mysterious message is proclaimed:

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

There’s the mystery, a human baby born of a human mother and the baby is Savior and Lord. This infant child is Immanuel, God with us.

We studied the incarnation in Article 18. Article 19 examines more deeply how these two natures come together and why they are important. Article 19 focuses on Christ the person.

To study this mystery together this evening brings us into the very presence of our mighty Savior, Jesus Christ Himself. Let's follow the order of Article 19 and consider Jesus as God first and then Jesus as man.

Jesus is God, true God of true God.

Article 19 starts by confessing Christ's divine nature. He remains uncreated, without beginning or end, filling heaven and earth. He is with us always and never is He absent from us.

His deity is affirmed in all the titles of deity given to Jesus; in the worship ascribed to Him; and in the affirmations of Scripture.

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John 1:18 "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."

John 20:28 "Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!'"

Romans 9:5 "To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen."

Colossians 2:9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily

Titus 2:13 "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ"

Hebrews 1:8 "But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.'"

2 Peter 1:1 "To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ"

His deity is apparent in his being:

the object of human and angelic worship and of saving faith;
the possessor of all divine attributes and the exerciser of exclusively divine functions such as creator, the forgiveness of sins, and the final judgment;
the one addressed in petitionary prayer;

Robert Bowman and Ed Komoszewski sum this up with the HANDS acronym:

Jesus deserves the **Honors** only due to God,
Jesus shares the **Attributes** that only God can possess,
Jesus is given **Names** that can only be given to God,
Jesus performs **Deeds** that only God can perform,
Jesus possesses a **Seat** on the throne of God.

Jesus is fully God and His divine nature didn't change when He became man.

Jesus is human, true and sinless man.

In the same way that Christ kept His divine properties, so in His human nature He remained human. But His human nature wasn't eternal, it was created, it had a beginning when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary.

As bread is made from wheat and wine from grapes, so Christ was made from a woman, flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone.

Luke 2:52 Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

He had the full range of human experiences and feelings. He was tired, hungry and thirsty. He was happy, sad, and angry. He got sweaty, His feet ached, He suffered pain. As a human being He could only be in one place at one time.

Jesus is the second Adam, clothed with our flesh and blood, with a body and a soul. He has a mind and a heart.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus was as human as any human could be except for sin.

Jesus lived His days on earth through His human mind and body, completely identifying with us in every way and in every experience. In His human nature He didn't know everything. He only used His divine resources and powers when the Father's will required it. So He could know what people were thinking and He could do mighty miracles as it served His greater purposes to confirm the message of salvation He came to deliver.

To this very day and forever Jesus still has His human nature. It's immortal, but it hasn't changed from being created and human.

Putting the realities of these two natures together.

It's not a natural thing for God and man to share natures. Humans having both a body and soul is natural and normal. This is how God created us to be. But there isn't a natural relationship between the divine and human nature.

Article 19 concludes with this greatest mystery of all, how these two separate and distinct natures are united into a single person.

When you read all the creeds and confessions you can tell how important this doctrine is by how carefully they word the explanations and by how precise and exact they are.

There are *three basic truths* that are preserved and protected.

First, the person of the Son of God is inseparably united and joined together with our human nature.

The two natures are not like oil and water, which when poured together separate with the oil on top of the water. Christ's two natures are inseparable united and joined together.

Second, the two natures, the divine nature and the human nature, are united together in one single person.

In the Trinity there are three distinct persons and each shares the same divine nature. In Christ there is one person who shares two distinct and different natures. In the Trinity God says we. In the person of Christ He never says we, He says I or me. There are not two Sons of God, one who is divine, and one who is human.

When we look at Jesus we must say, this God is man and this man is God.

John Calvin explains this by using the example of our own human body and soul. We consist of two substances that are separate and distinct. The body is not the soul and the soul is not the body. We are one person with two elements joined together in perfect and complete harmony. These two natures make up one person.

Third, each nature retains its own distinct properties. Each nature remains and nothing of either nature is lost.

“Remaining what He was, He became what He was not.”

While remaining what He was (fully divine), Jesus also became what He had not been before (fully human). Jesus did not give up any of His divinity when He became a man. Jesus had every essential quality that every human has while still being God.

The Belgic Confession gives *three illustrations*:

First, Christ's two natures were so united that He didn't separate them at death. What was separated from Christ's body on the cross was His real human soul, not His divine nature.

On the cross Jesus committed His real, human spirit into the hands of the Father. His human spirit departed His human body, but His divine nature remained united with His human nature.

Second, in the tomb Christ's natures remained united. The Godhead never ceased to be in Him.

Third, as an infant He was still the one who sustained the universe by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3).

Application and Conclusion.

What is the benefit of this doctrine for us? The last sentence of Article 19 states it simply.

Because Jesus is God He is able to conquer sin and death for us by His power.

No one but God could satisfy God's justice and bear God's wrath without being crushed by it.

The infinite value of Christ's sacrifice is seen in the fact that our sin is an infinite offense against the infinite majesty of God. In order to satisfy His infinite wrath there needed to be a sacrifice of infinite value.

Psalm 49:7-8 Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life,

8 for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice,

9 that he should live on forever and never see the pit.

Because Jesus is human He is able to die for us and in our place.

If Jesus was only God then He could never die. And before the incarnation the Son of God could not save us, for without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. Only as the God-man could Jesus suffer and die in our place. He took our flesh because of our sin and misery and He took our flesh so that He could take away our sin and misery.

Because of both of these Jesus is able to be our Mediator, our Messiah, our Savior, our Redeemer.

I Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus

Christianity is a redemptive religion, Christianity preaches a redemptive Gospel, Christianity alone holds out good news and hope to a dying world.

Salvation has come into our world in the God-man Jesus Christ, who is both God and man.

Jesus is the only way, the only truth, the only life. Apart from Him there is no other way, no salvation, no resurrection, no eternal life in heaven.

Our salvation depends on this mysterious union of the divine and the human.

II Corinthians 5:19 in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself.

The incarnation is the great act of compassion and grace on God's part.

Oh how great is the love of God shown to us in His sending His own Son to be one of us.

Oh how great is the love of Christ that He would willingly condescend to so great a humiliation as to become one of us and to be forever united to our flesh.

When all is said and done, we must not forget to sit back and take in the breathtaking miracle that the incarnation truly is. It's the most amazing miracle in all the Bible and in all creation history, greater than the creation of the universe, greater even than the resurrection.

The infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of the living God became a man, He joined Himself to human nature forever. Today as He sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty He sits in human flesh, with scars in His hands and feet.

The infinite God becoming finite man is the most profound miracle and mystery of the universe.

Thanks be to God for the unparalleled uniqueness of Jesus Christ!

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Prayer: Holy Father, indeed, thanks be to you for your indescribable and incomprehensible gift. We give you all the glory, honor, praise and worship due your name. Increase in all of us a love and devotion and adoration for Jesus. Open our eyes to see His glory, the glory of the Son sent from the Father full of grace and truth. Open our lips to bear witness to who He is and what He has done. Open our hearts to truly love Him, the light of our soul, the joy of our salvation.