

**Sola Christus – Living by Christ Alone**  
**1 Tim 2:5-7, Col 3:1-17**

Friends, I don't know if you follow Canadian provincial politics outside of our own province – but last week you may have heard that Dalton McGuinty, the former Premier of Ontario has returned to Queens Park in Toronto, not as an elected government official – but as a lobbyist.

Some children's educational software company has hired Mr. McGuinty to make use of his previous government relationships and connections for their advantage. So, Mr. McGuinty will now spend his time setting up meetings with current government officials and lobbying for this company.

Perhaps he will try to persuade the Minister of Education to give this company an exclusive contract to supply all the primary schools in Ontario with learning software...

Or maybe he will try to persuade the Minister of Business Development to invest in this company and help them expand into the international market...

Because that's what a lobbyist does – they use their connections and relationships with people in power to advocate on your behalf and they attempt to influence the government to make decisions and laws that work in your favor.

Why? Because it's not possible for the average person to simply walk into the Government's Offices and set up an appointment with a high-ranking Minister or the Premier and speak about their concerns or what they would like to see the Government do that would benefit them.

At best the average person can try to set-up a meeting with their local elected official and bring their concerns to them and hope that their concerns stand out from all the others that have been brought to the MLA's attention so that they try to take action on it.

But if even if they do, it will probably not go anywhere because your local MLA is not a mover and shaker in the gov't or they aren't an up and coming power player...

So if you have an issue that you want the gov't to pay attention to and respond to in your favor, you need to hire a lobbyist in order to bring your concerns to the right people and get results.

As the saying goes "It's not what you know, it's who you know!"

So Lobbyists have become an integral part of how our political system works – both in Canada and in the United States and other Western nations.

And if you think that there is something a bit undemocratic and unfair about bypassing the regular processes and lobbying government officials then you're not alone – lobbying leaves a bad taste in many people's mouths.

And if you think it seems out of place in the government, then for sure you'd agree that it would be out of place in the church, but that's precisely what had developed in the Medieval Catholic Church in the 1500's.

A whole system of "spiritual lobbying" had developed to help ordinary everyday people bring their cares and concerns before our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ and to assure the people of their forgiveness and salvation.

Regular Christians were not confident that God would or could hear their prayers... and if He did hear, they weren't sure that He would be so inclined to help them, and if He did help, would grant them what they had specifically asked for?

So, medieval Catholic Christians began the practice of praying to and through other Christians who were noted for their piety and holy lives, Saints who were "closer" to God and Jesus than they were and could essentially lobby for the common Christian and hopefully get better results

And the ministry of the priest with the common people was influenced by this as well.

While it's biblical and helpful to confess our sins to one another – James 5:16 says as much – people begin to believe that only the Priest could take their sins to God to be forgiven.

And they believed that the penance which the Priest prescribed, which was supposed to be for reflection to assist in becoming contrite about your sin, was instead “the deed” which one performed in order to be certain that you were right with God once again.

So you can see in all this how the common Christian's relationship with Jesus Christ would begin to suffer if you didn't pray to Him or confess your sins to Him or receive assurance in Him that you were forgiven.

And I'm not certain if it was the result, or perhaps the cause, but in the midst of all this “lobbying” the Medieval Catholic Church began to emphasize the divinity of Jesus and his status as exalted risen ruler over all to the exclusion of his humanity and ability, as it says in Hebrews 4:15 *“to empathize with our weakness and temptations.”*

And so to compensate for a Jesus that was lofty and removed and hard to relate to – people began to identify more with his mother Mary.

She was gentle and meek and mild and kind and easy to approach, and besides we all know that if you really want to influence someone in your favor – you get their mother on side with your cause.

In fact, at first glance, that seems to be why Jesus performed his first miracle at the Wedding in Cana.

John 2 reads *“When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, “They have no more wine.” “Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”*

And we know how the rest of the story goes – the best wine ever!

And the misapplication of this story is; if you want Jesus to do something for you, ask his mother...

So, this was the situation for the common Christian in the 1500's - they had to lobby through the Priests, the Saints or the Virgin Mary in order to bring their confessions, concerns or cares to Jesus, to God – and as a result their relationship, their confidence, their faith in Christ was suffering and sentimentality and superstition was flourishing.

In response – those who were working to reform the Church – Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox and others said – no! Solus Christus! Christ alone is the mediator between us and God – there is no other!

That was the gospel of the early church and it's why Paul wrote to Pastor Timothy *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5)*

So you can see why as we said last week that Sola Scriptura – by Scripture alone is so important because it is scripture alone that reveals Christ is the only mediator between God and ourselves...

Acts 4:12 *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."*

Hebrews 4:14 *"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess."*

1 John 2:1-2 *"But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."*

In fact it's something that Jesus himself taught; John 14:6–7 *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well."*

Solus Christus – Christ alone goes between us and God - so there is no need to add any other mediators, and in fact it simply won't work.

Any other mediator will not connect you with God because they are simply human – as opposed to Christ who is by nature both fully human and fully divine – and again it is the scripture that reveals this truth to us.

Now, this past month we have been applying the Five Solas to what it means to make disciples, as Jesus commanded us to and that involves as he said *“teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”* (Matt 28:18)

So it is very important that we are teaching those whom we disciple that the only way you can be certain that you are connecting to God is through Jesus Christ alone – Solus Christus.

Now –the Reformers certainly did a terrific job in making sure they passed this truth on to us – and teaching us that when we pray in Jesus name we can be confident that God himself hears our prayers – as our Lord himself taught us. (John 14:13)

So you won't find us praying to Mary, nor do we pray to any of the Saints or the Church Fathers, and we certainly don't teach people to do that either as we disciple them.

However, it can be easy to pat ourselves on the back for this and forget that the reason people developed these superstitious practices was because they were looking for assurance, they wanted to hedge their bets – they wanted to be confident that God heard their prayers because they didn't believe they could approach Jesus or God.

And friends – that has not changed.

We still look for assurance, who doesn't want to hedge their bets, people still do not have confidence that God hears us and that we can approach Jesus with whatever we need.

The temptation to add to Jesus or look to other things aside from Jesus is always there and can take many different forms aside from praying to Mary and the Saints. (e.g. we think

music connects us God, the intensity by which we pray, or our sincerity, or a methodology...)

So how does Solus Christus challenge us today - to reform what we believe about how we connect to God and receive his blessings – so that what we are truly teaching those we disciple to do so through Christ alone and not through anything else.

Well friends let me highlight three things;

First, those whom we are called to disciple will most certainly have been shaped and influenced in some way by our pluralistic Canadian culture and its popular belief that all religions and expressions of spirituality are equal and lead to God.

Solus Christus contradicts this false belief. If we are solidly grounded in Christ alone then at some point in the process of discipling others we need to teach them and help them understand that only Christ leads to God.

And this isn't because we somehow think we are superior, this is the message of the scriptures; it is the very message of Christ himself! *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Of course we can't just go around saying Jesus is the only way... without explaining why.

If we are trying to help people put their faith and trust in Jesus we need to show them why they can and should trust in him as opposed to someone else.

So an important part of the discipleship process is helping people understand how Sin blocks humanity from full and clear access to God, how it has twisted our relationship with our Creator so that we either ignore Him, or we try to impress Him, or we outright rebel against Him - so that we are separated and disconnected from God.

However the scriptures teach us that Jesus was the only person to ever exist that was both fully human and divine and so He can function as the one to go between, the mediator.

So, as enlightened as Buddha was – he is not a mediator, as much of a prophet as Mohammed claimed to be – he is not a mediator, for all his spiritual simplicity the Dhali Lama is not a mediator... and even though he is our Christian brother and a good example for us, Pope Francis is not the mediator... only Jesus Christ fully God fully human brings God and humanity together.

So we teach, explain, give illustrations, share life examples and testimony as part of discipling others so that they will come to believe Solus Christus and say *“I confess in faith that Christ alone connects me with God, no one else!” Amen!*

And this confession of faith in Christ is terrific, but it needs to be expressed in people lives.

So, the second way Solus Christus challenges us is in how we teach those we disciple to live out their faith through their actions...

Faith in Christ alone must be expressed, because as James says *“faith without works is dead”* (James 2:17) So what does that look like?

We as we mentioned we don't pray to the saints or Mary or do penance to assure ourselves that we're forgiven – and if you're coming out of a nominal or superstitious Catholic background perhaps those can still be temptations for you and its very much an expression of faith in Christ alone for you to pray and confess your sins directly to Him.

But friends, I think it has more to do with each of us copes with that God-sized hole that we have at the center of our lives.

You see we were created to have fellowship – not just a “relationship” – but fellowship; intimate friendship and companionship with God – that's what Adam and Eve had with God before the consequences of their disobedience ruptured that connection.

But we still yearn for it – even if we don't quite know what it is that we are longing for. We just somehow feel there should be more, that we want to be part of something bigger than ourselves, and we are drawn to things which make us feel healthy, happy and fulfilled and truly alive.

And yet Sin will still twist this... and we become preoccupied with “wellness” and those things in God's creation which make us feel “well” and we put those things at the center of our life instead of God, and they become idols.

We've been deceived into believing that one of God's good gifts such as “being balanced” or “healthy” or “pursuing our dreams” or “being loving” or “spending time with our family” is what really gives us life and makes us feel alive and we center ourselves and our identity on it.

Solus Christus challenges this and helps us reform our actions to express faith in Christ alone.

So, a very simple way of expressing that Christ should be at the center of our lives - because He alone connects our life to God - can be expressed in how we center our lives around the practice of spiritual disciplines and making them a priority.

So making a priority of reading the scriptures and spending time in prayer on a daily basis, attending worship each week with your fellow Christians, giving 10% back to God, helping others and serving those who don't deserve it...

Friends, re-arranging our schedules and routines so that these actions and activities are getting priority in our lives – is one way to express our faith in Christ alone and it's a good place to start with people whom we are discipling.

However growing in centering your life this way doesn't always mean going from spending 10 minutes a day reading scripture and praying to spending 3 hours in devotions... or that you go from attending worship on Sunday morning to being at every church function that happens from Monday through Saturday...



Growing in expressing our faith in Christ alone means integrating Christ into the center of all the rest of our daily activities so that our whole life and everything in it is built on Christ.

Christ in your relationships, Christ in your job, Christ in your recreation, Christ in your hobbies, Christ in your sports, Christ in your possessions – so that as Paul says in Colossians 3:17 *“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

Friends, the life and salvation that we receive from God through Jesus Christ is an amazing gift- you know this, anyone who is being discipled knows this – and so the only appropriate way to say thanks is to do **everything** in the name of Jesus... and I do mean **everything**... as an offering back to God.

He gave us everything so we give back everything – but it only counts... and we can only really give it back to God by doing it

in the name of Jesus Christ – and because Christ is the Word by which **everything** was created – not only does he function as a mediator between us and God, he also mediates between God and everything else in our life.

So friends – this is what the Apostle Paul is encouraging us to do when he writes *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God...” (Col 3:1-3)*

And that’s the third thing friends... only Christ has ascended into the very presence of God Almighty and He has been given all glory, power, and authority over everything!

So not only is He the mediator because He is the Word of God made flesh – Human and Divine but also because of his location – He is in the presence of God Almighty – at his right hand... You don’t get closer to God than that!

You know it’s kind of ironic that everyone is looking for evidence that Heaven is for real... when we ought to be

concerned and looking for evidence about whether or not humanity is fit to be in the presence of God in Heaven.

But the ascended Jesus Christ is that evidence – he has taken our very humanity where it has never been before – face to face with God Almighty!

And He is there to lobby for us! To represent us – to prove to God that Humanity can be redeemed, perfected and glorified and made fit to dwell in the presence of God forever!

Where Christ has gone we shall follow – that is our hope.

*As Paul says “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” (Col 3:3-4)*

No one else, nothing else - can make a way for us to go through death, through the grave, and into the presence of our Creator...

No one else, and nothing we’ve done outside of Christ can survive and be purified through the final judgment...

and no one else is our guarantee that one day we will receive a resurrected glorified body in the new Heavens and new Earth – only Christ is, only Christ can, only Christ will

Christ Alone – Solus Christus! Friends how amazing is this?!

Praise God, Praise Jesus, Praise the Spirit – Amen.