

Of Christ the Mediator (Part 1)

John 17:1-19; WCF 8.1

Reformed Church of Wainuiomata, 19 May 2019, 16:30

(Sermon put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)¹

Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

WCF 8.1 shows us again what beautiful things the Bible says about our Mediator with God, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Our sermon has three points...

- Mediator
- Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King
- Gift

Mediator

What is a mediator?

Well, it's someone who works with two (or more) parties to bring about agreement and reconciliation!

So, why do human beings need a mediator between them and God?

Well, because, through man's sin, he became estranged from God. In fact, Rm 8:7 says of natural man that he hates God & God's Law!²

An atheist might say, "I don't hate God!" "I just don't believe there is a God."

And an agnostic will in all likelihood say, "I don't know whether or not there is a God."

"But if there is a God, I don't have anything against Him." "I'm not opposed to Him!"

In other words, people will not admit that their hearts are filled with enmity & hostility toward their Creator!

But the Bible says that this hostility runs so deep that, by our sinful nature, we do not even want to think about God!³

So, because of this estrangement between man & God, man needed a mediator!

Granted, throughout history, there have been many a mediator: Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, and many more.

¹ In writing this sermon, I am greatly indebted to my two main sources whose guidance I appreciate: 1) Van Dixhoorn, Chad. 2014. *Confessing the Faith: a reader's guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith*. Carlisle, PA : The Banner of Truth Trust. 484p.

2) Sproul, R.C. 2006. *The truth we confess*. (In: Sproul, R.C. ed. *Truths we confess: a layman's guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith – in three volumes*. Vol. I (chapters 1-8 of the Confession) Phillipsburg, NJ : P&R Publishing. 279p.).

Many words & phrases I have written, I have gladly borrowed with great thankfulness from this source.

² Cf. Rm 8:7-8 ***For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.*** ⁸ ***Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*** (Emphasis mine).

Also cf. Js 4:4, ***You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.***

³ Cf. e.g. Rm 3:10-18, "***...None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.***" "***Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.***" "***The venom of asps is under their lips.***" "***Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.***" "***Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.***" "***There is no fear of God before their eyes.***"

Also cf. 1 Cor 2:14 ***The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.***

But, ultimately, there's only One Person fit to be that Mediator. That's why Paul writes to Timothy, "***There is only One Mediator between God and men – the Man Christ Jesus!***" (1 Tm 2:5).

Today, in our pluralistic Western culture, people assume that there are many mediators between God and man – yes, many paths to God – such as Buddha, Confucius, Mohammad.

In fact, people are repulsed by the idea that there is only one way to God.⁴

But, look! When all is said & done, is it not so that there really is only one Man who *qualifies* to be Mediator – and that *that one Man* can only be Jesus Christ? After all, missing from all other religions is an atonement which satisfies the justice of God!

What's more, other religions only have *human beings*; but Christianity alone has a *God-Man* – yes, One who shares in both the nature of God and the nature of our humanity!

And our Lord Jesus is not merely the *unique* Mediator, but He is the *only* Mediator to the *exclusion* of any other!

Why is *unique* not the best way to describe Jesus' mediatorship?

Well, because of the way we use the word *unique*.

You see, the New-Zealand athlete, Peter Snell, was the first man to run the 800m race in 1min 44.3 seconds!⁵ So, one could say that Peter Snell did something *unique*! But, look, after Peter Snell came two other men who achieved the same feat. And, after these men, there have been at least eleven more who have even improved on Peter Snell's old record.⁶

So, what is the point we try to make?

Well, the point is this: Someone can do something which is unique, but someone *else* might come and *repeat* or even *improve* on that action!⁷ But this is not the case with our Lord Jesus!

You see, the singularity of our Lord Jesus Christ lies in the fact that He is the *one-&-only-begotten* of the Father. His atonement for our sins – yes, His mediation work on the cross – occurred once for all. Indeed, He alone is God incarnate (God in the flesh). No one else can ever again do it! There will never be another incarnation ("enfleshment") of God!

That's why we say that our Lord Jesus Christ is not merely a *unique* Mediator, but He is the *only* Mediator to the *exclusion* of any other!

My brother & sister, it's sad that, in a way, you & I (and everyone who has been in church for a long time) have become used to the most poignant words in the Bible – words that might have lost their oomph for us, i.e. the words of Jn 3:16 which describe this one-and-only Mediator: "***For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son*** (See the exclusion in the word "only-begotten"?), ***that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.***"⁸

Here is another beauty: Jesus didn't *surprise* God the Father by sneakily coming to earth so as to act without the Father's knowledge! No, does not this exact same Bible verse (Jn 3:16) point to the fact that, "***God was pleased, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only-begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man!***"⁹ Yes, "***God so loved the world...!***"

Wow!

⁴ My adaptation of the words of Sproul (ibid:235)

⁵ Cf. e.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Snell

⁶ Cf. e.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/800_metres_world_record_progression

⁷ My adaptation of the words and idea of Sproul (ibid:236)

⁸ Emphasis mine

⁹ Cf. WCF 8.1a

But here's yet another beauty: You see, what you & I (as NT believers) know today, even God's Old-Testament people knew, in some form, right from the beginning!

I mean, after all, is it not so that, from the earliest pages of the OT, the coming of the Perfect Mediator was promised and prophesied about!?

Indeed, God's OT people knew that a suffering servant – and beloved of God, and filled with the Spirit – would come!¹⁰

But you & I (and all NT believers) have the clearest vision of Him, for, as Peter says, He “was revealed in these last times” for our sakes!¹¹

My brother & sister, *now* we can see how it was possible that a saviour could be *chosen even before the creation of the world!* Yes, *now* we can understand how one could be ordained as the mediator between God and man at a time when there was yet no man – yes, when only God existed! It was because the Saviour was no mere man, but the Son of God Himself!¹²

Well, this was point 1 – a point in which we looked again at our Lord Jesus as the One & Only Mediator.

But here is something significant: You see, we said that, before our Lord Jesus came in the flesh, there had been many human beings who were temporary mediators between God and man – men like Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, King David, Isaiah, Jeremiah and many more! These were all temporary and imperfect mediators! Yes, they were only *types* of the Perfect Mediator who was still to come!

Well, what sort of *offices* did all these men fill? Yes, what different God-given *jobs* were all these temporary & imperfect mediators *anointed* for?

Were they not either *prophets* or *priests* or *kings*?

Well, here's the significance: In the One & Only Perfect Mediator (Jesus Christ) we find *all three offices* – which brings us to point 2...

Jesus as Prophet, Priest, and King

In OT times, God gave His Word to the prophets to go and proclaim it to the people! In other words, these prophets were mediators between God and man!

Well, here's the beauty: Our Lord Jesus not only *proclaimed* the Word of God – no, He *is* the Word of God; yes, the Word of God who (as John 1:1 & 14 says) became flesh and dwelt among us!¹³

Indeed, our Lord Jesus not only *speaks/says* the word of God, but *reveals it in His own person* – yes, by all He does, says, and is!

When Old Testament prophets prophesied, they spoke of things beyond themselves – of things regarding Jesus! But when *Jesus* prophesies, He speaks about Himself!

So, were the Old-Testament prophets mediators?

Yes, they were – but *imperfect* mediators!

But Jesus is the Perfect & Ultimate Prophet and Mediator!

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. Is 42:1 ***Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.*** Also cf. Mt 12:15-21 in which Matthew quotes Is 42:1ff.

¹¹ Cf. 1 Pt 1:20-21 (especially v.20), ***He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you*** ²¹ ***who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.***

¹² Words adapted from Van Dixhoorn (ibid:108)

¹³ Jn 1:1 & 14, ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”***

What about Jesus being *priest*?

Well, the *Old-Testament priests* used to sacrifice *animals* for people's sins! They never sacrificed *themselves*!

But our Lord Jesus (as Perfect & Ultimate Priest) came and sacrificed *Himself* for God's people's sins!

What's more, the Old-Testament priests had to *keep on sacrificing* animals – yes, *every day*! But because our Lord Jesus' sacrifice completely satisfied God's wrath, His sacrifice needed only to be given once and for all time!

Again, when an Old-Testament high priest died, *another priest* took up his office – yes, his office was assumed by a *successor*. But the Lord Jesus is our *High Priest forever*!

Whereas the Old-Testament high priest used to enter the Holy of Holies of the temple after he had sacrificed an animal on the altar, our Lord Jesus – after He had sacrificed *Himself* – entered *heaven*, yes, into the *heavenly* Holy of Holies into the real *presence of God*, where He continues to intercede in prayer for His people, forever!

So, were the Old-Testament priests mediators?

Yes, they were – but *imperfect* mediators!

But Jesus is the Perfect & Ultimate Priest and Mediator!

What about Jesus as *King*?

Well, the Old-Testament kings *ruled* over God's people and *protected* them – again, very imperfectly so!

Here's another thing: Many Old-Testament kings, as they saw that their lives on earth were nearly over, tried to establish a *dynasty of succession* for them – in which father would be followed by son, and grandson, and great-grandson up until the end of the earth! But all to no avail, for the House of King Omri (and even the earthly House of King David) only lasted for a season!

But our *Lord Jesus' Kingship* is *forever*!

Yes, He has been anointed and crowned in heaven itself to become the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!¹⁴ He is the ultimate King to whom the Father has given all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18).¹⁵

My brother & sister, no wonder the WCF 8.1 (based upon the Bible) tells us that Jesus is the Head of the church which is His body.¹⁶

What does this mean?

¹⁴ Cf. 1 Tim 6:13-16 (especially v.15), *I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen* (Emphasis mine).

¹⁵ Cf. Mt 28:18-20, *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* (Emphasis mine)

¹⁶ Cf. Col 1:18, *And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent* (Emphasis mine).

Also cf. Eph 1:22-23, *And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

Also cf. Eph 4:15; 5:23; Col. 2:19; [1 Cor. 11:3; Col. 2:10]

Well, let's picture a human body! Is it not so that our heads rule the rest of our body?
Yes, is it not so that the head (containing the brain/mind) controls everything which happens in all of our body?

Yes, this was very vividly made clear to me when my father had a successful operation on his heart, but, two days later, a blood clot in his brainstem (high up in his neck) cut off all blood supply to his brain. From there, all his body functions stopped!

Yes, our heads control everything which happens in our earthly tent-dwellings (bodies).¹⁷

Well, so *Christ* is the head in the sense that to Him has been given authority to rule over His church!

So, that being the case, is it now the church itself that determines her mission, identity and agenda? No, the church (all true believers) are to remember that they are to work out their lives on *Christ's terms and for His glory!*

And it should be a joy & pleasure to submit to the authority of Jesus, for, look, is He not also our Saviour – yes, the One who so loved us that He gave His life for us!?

And here is great comfort: The One who so loved us that He gave His life for us, is also our *Judge!* Does not this very fact bring great comfort to everyone who is in Christ – yes, to everyone who has truly received Jesus as their Saviour & Lord?

Of *course*, it gives comfort, for now, when I think of the Last Day when I will stand before the Judge of Heaven & Earth, I may have peace – peace that my Judge will look through His Saviour's eyes at me and welcome me home!

Will I be fearless then?

I guess, at first, even the Christian will fear, but when he sees the kind face of his Judge, his fear will change into absolute awe – yes, he/she will be stunned!

Well, so far re point 2.

Here is point 3...

Gift

My brother & sister, the last sentence in WCF 8.1 describes how our wonderful Mediator, Jesus, will receive an *inheritance* from His Father – yes, a *gift* which has been promised to Him from all eternity!

Have you ever thought what that gift could be?

It's *you & me* – it's *all Christians!*

Yes, the Eternal Son asked for a 'seed,' yes, for children whom He could gaze upon with pleasure for all His days! Look, is that not what Is 53:10 says... "...*when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring*"?¹⁸

¹⁷ For our earthly bodies being described as tent dwellings, cf. 2 Cor 5:1ff. ***For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee*** (Emphasis mine).

¹⁸ Hebrew *zera`* (זרע) "seed, offspring."

Also cf. Ps 22:30, "***Offspring/Posterity will serve Him...***" Also cf. Eph 4:8 ***Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."***

Who could ever have thought that *you & I* would be His gift – we who are just like the complaining, arguing, and scared-stiff disciples of Jesus’ own day!?¹⁹

And yet, there in Gethsemane where our Lord Jesus was in fellowship with His Father (and where He was strengthened by the Spirit), we hear the Son giving thanks! You ask, “For what did He give thanks?”

Well, for the fact that His Father had kept His word and had given to Him (to Jesus) a people from out of this world!

Can you imagine!? On the eve of His crucifixion, this (His gift – you & I) was what moved the Son to offer praises to the Father!

Hear again some excerpts from His prayer (our NT passage) ...

I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you... ⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.²⁰ ... I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word...²¹

Dear Wainui member, have you received Jesus Christ as your Saviour & Lord?

Well, if you said “Yes!” then you can rejoice, because then you have as your Saviour, the One & Only Mediator between God & us! Then, here where you often struggle with life’s hardships & questions, you have peace and the assurance that you belong – and belong eternally – to your Creator & Saviour!

AMEN (2370 words excluding footnotes)

¹⁹ Words adapted from Van Dixhoorn (ibid:109)

²⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 17:6–11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

²¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 17:20–21). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.