

Jesus our Rescuer

A good while after Jesus had begun his ministry, healing the sick; casting out demons, showing by his life and actions that He was who He said He was. We read in Matthew 16 a defining moment regarding Jesus mission and identity.

Reading from verse 13;

“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

They replied, “Some says John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.”

As you know we have been going out on the doors recently, just trying to engage people in conversations, inviting people along to church, talking about our faith, and about what Jesus means to us.

For those that do come to the door, a small number are open to talk, some hold some ‘strange ideas’ about religion, some are of another faith, quite a normal crowd really.

But for those we do get to talk with, it seems time and again we go back to this same question posed by Jesus in our reading this morning (It is the bottom line in evangelism and cuts through the ‘waffle’)

“Who do people say the Son of Man is?” who do you say I am?” or put more specifically to people we speak to **‘who do you say Jesus was?’**

This question ‘who was Jesus’ however for many today it seems they do not even want to even entertain this question let alone investigate with any real desire to find an answer. But it is a question that we will all have to answer one day whether we like it or not. Scripture says: *“Every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord”*.
(Philippians 2:11)

The tragedy for many though is, when you’re dead it’s too late to answer it!

The truth is though, whatever opinion you have; Jesus is unique, there is nobody in history like Him at all. Jesus is the most talked about, the most sung about person there ever was. There is also nobody else in history that has made the claims He did.

We even record history and set our date clock (2022) from the time of his birth BC/ AD

Jesus is that significant in our history. But it seems to me there can only be 3 possibilities as we try to honestly answer this question. 'Who was Jesus?'

He is either a liar, a lunatic, or He is who He says He is and that is; 'Lord of our universe' the 'only begotten Son of God'. A person has to take one, **and only one**, position. Either Jesus was crazy or **He is who He says He is**.

And if He is that has implications for us all.

CS Lewis does a better job than I of summing up the truth about this defining and critical question that Jesus asks His disciples and the choice we all have to make.

Here's an Excerpt from Mere Christianity

He says this;

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.'

That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sorts of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell.

You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God.

But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to"

As I said earlier It is tragic today that many people do not want to even face the question 'who was Jesus?'

An even greater tragedy is many of our children do not even know who Jesus was! They have little or no knowledge of Him at all. The present day school curriculum doesn't even acknowledge or allow any debate on the fundamental question 'who was Jesus?'

For example when we had the young people here a few years back, many we spoke to had no real concept who Jesus was. They couldn't explain His life even in the briefest

detail. We know as well that many today, their only familiarity with Jesus is through a swear word!

I remember the minister of a church we used to go to telling us that he had tried telling some children about Jesus and one lad said to him when he mentioned the name Jesus 'you just swore' !.

And we once could call this a Christian country! How far we have fallen.

Also many have grown up with or have have invented a different Jesus to the gospels to fit their 'own mould' or perceptions of Him, we have a 'mild and meek' Jesus who wouldn't harm a fly. A 'feminist Jesus' who is on the side of radical women's rights. A 'political Jesus' who would take up the cause of whatever political party you support. I could go on but it's not the real Jesus, just a 'god' created in our own image.

Do you find it incredible that the gospels give no idea of his physical appearance of Jesus. I believe this is because God is more concerned about the heart not the outward appearance.

"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'" (1 Samuel 16:7)

The truth is you cannot 'pigeon hole' Jesus in any way He is a character of so many contrasts.

I spoke a few weeks ago about the 'man Jesus' what he was like and we looked at the 'humility of Jesus' but there are so many facets to His character we could go on identifying each one week after week and never really figure Him out.

So this morning I want to look briefly at 3 key aspects about Jesus and **what he says about himself**. They say one way of getting to know a person is to listen to what they say about themselves.

Firstly He claimed to be THE ONLY WAY to know God

Jesus says in John 14:6 *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"*.

So by association Jesus is saying; there is no other way to know God, every other way or means to know God is false.

Edwin and I were talking a few days ago about some of the ways we had tried to find God. We were looking for peace but it didn't work it was a 'false peace'.

Jesus says *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”* (John 14:27)

And the peace He gives us is because we have been put right with God – the slate has been wiped clean. Through Jesus we become friends with God rather than enemies.

When you are right with someone after an argument peace naturally flows. When we are made right with God the channel opens up for true peace to flow through.

Secondly the ultimate claim Jesus made about himself was He was God

That is why He was crucified

Jesus explicitly told the Jews: *“‘I and the Father are one.’ Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, ‘I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?’ ‘We are not stoning you for any of these,’ replied the Jews, ‘but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God’ ”* (John 10:30-33).

I won't go into detail about this - It is throughout scripture. Jesus is the 2nd person in the trinity the Other's being the Father and Holy Spirit.

Thirdly –and I want to focus on this aspect this morning; **Jesus is the rescuer.**

There are so many scriptures that talk about His central mission **to rescue us** - that was His' bottom line purpose' in coming into our world.

To rescue us from what you may say? Well in the here and now, to rescue us from a life without meaning and purpose, from the endless treadmill of trying to satisfy our own selfish needs. To enable us to have life abundant.

In eternity; to rescue us from Hell and damnation, to be cut off from the love of God for ever to give us eternal life and know the love of God forever.

Here are some 'rescue verses' about Jesus

John 10:11 *“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep”*

John 11:25 *“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ^{and} whoever lives by believing in me will never die”.*

While other founders of religion came to teach people - Jesus came to rescue us. He is the only one that can do so.

One of the most frequent songs we sing here at CBC is 'Jesus Messiah' the words go.

'Jesus messiah **the rescue** for sinners'

Paul says in Galatians 1:3-4

*“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to **rescue us from the present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory forever and ever”. Amen.*

*“Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and **I will rescue you**”. (Isaiah 46:4)*

This is Jesus great mission to rescue us.

But just to illustrate this concept of rescue; I don't know whether many of you have seen the film or know the story of Schindlers list?

Oskar Schindler was a business man and a member of the Nazi party during World War 2 and to begin with his only interest was to make profit by making armaments for the German war machine with cheap labour (Jewish labour)

However as time goes on Schindler's motivations switch from profit to human sympathy as he witnessed the brutal and evil murder of countless innocent Jews in the ghettos in Poland in 1942.

In the end He was able to rescue over 1100 Jews from death in the gas chambers by turning his factory into a refuge for Jews. He does that by lavishing bribes upon the German army and SS officials in charge.

At the end of the war he became completely bankrupt as all his money went into saving the Jews. But both him and his wife were named as ‘Righteous among the Nations’ by the State of Israel in 1993. Oskar Schindler is the only member of the German Nazi Party to be buried on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

If you haven't seen the film ‘Schindlers list’ I would recommend you watch it. It is a stark reminder of the depth of man's cruelty to man. The holocaust is something we should never forget.

As I said it is the story of **the rescue** by one man of over 1100 Jews from certain death in the Gas chambers. As I was watching it I was thinking of the similarities to the Christian message.

Here was a man that was a crook and embezzler only interested in himself and the money he could make. Then his eyes were opened to the evil all around him, just like when we are converted our eyes are open and we see the truth.

But from that point on he ensures he does everything he can to rescue many from certain death.

We are converted and from that point on we should try to 'rescue others' from certain eternal death and judgement.

There is a scene on want to play you from the film. It at the end of the war and Schindler has to escape from the Russians who are advancing into the heart of Germany. And he is saying goodbye to those Jewish people he has rescued.

Play Schiundlers list...

I found that scene very moving as it spoke to me about evangelism and speaking to others, like Schindler **we are in the 'rescue business'**. **Trying to rescue and see people saved and come into the Kingdom of God before it's too late.**

The Bible message is; we will all face judgement one day and there will e a separation of the 'sheep and goats'. **If you don't know Jesus you will be lost for all eternity.**

Let us try to follow our Lord Jesus example and attempt **to rescue** as many as we can, to 'pull them from the burning flak' so to speak before that great day arrives and when the door is finally closed.

If we do we will hear those great words 'well done good and faithful servant' (Matt 25:23)

Amen

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