

REDISCOVER JESUS: 3 QUESTIONS

John 14:1-7

Intro

Last Sunday we talked about how it's never too late to begin knocking on the door of a relationship with God.

This morning we're going to talk about one question...which leads to another...before ending up at yet another. I know: I can feel the excitement emanating off of you!

So here's where we start: who do you say that Jesus is? Not what have you heard me say, or have been told by others, but you. Who do you say that Jesus is?

Why do we start with this question? Because if you're going to try and have a relationship with Jesus (which starts by knocking on the door), it helps to know what door we should be knocking on in the first place!

So again, who do you say that Jesus is? And then the corresponding question that all good 'type A' individuals necessarily ask, how do you know if you are starting to sniff anything close to what is true?

So, question number 1: who do you say Jesus is?

Which, after speed-bumping over question 1.5 (how do we know if what we believe is true), takes us directly to question 2: who did Jesus say he was? Our opening passage provides us an oblique answer from the lips of Jesus.

The sharpened version? Jesus said he was God. The scripture reads this way.

John 14:1-7

14'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.' ⁵Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' ⁶Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

'Rediscover Jesus: 3 Questions'

'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.' Who do you say that Jesus is?

Because Jesus is saying that he...is...God.

Where does that perspective come from?

From when we look at how Jesus describes himself in the Gospels. It is there that the authors of the Gospels have Jesus taking on the title of the 'son of Man' 80 times.

Now we hear that 'son of Man' descriptor, and the response is what you would expect: what's that mean? Not a normal turn of phrase in our vernacular.

What it is, is in response to is a vision of the prophet Daniel from hundreds of years prior. It was in these visions that Daniel described someone like 'a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven; and when he reached the Ancient One...he received everlasting dominion, glory, and kingship.'

When Jesus says that he is the son of man, Jesus is saying, 'I am the Messiah. I am the rightful heir to an eternal throne and I will rule forever. My kingdom is untouchable and unstoppable.'

Now despite all of the advances that societies have achieved over the last 2000 years, it's not as if people in Jesus' day and age were dunces who were willing to follow whatever happened to be the shiniest new penny being tossed on the pile of perspective messiahs. They, like us today, needed some evidence.

And they got it. Miracles? We've got your miracles right here!

Water into wine (John 2:1-11)? Feeding of the 5000 (in all four Gospel accounts)? Walking on water (Matthew 8:26-27)? Calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41)? Check! Check! Check! Check!

Need more? How about healing the sick? It apparently happened so frequently that they weren't able to keep a tally of how many were affected. In addition, there were eight specific mentions of Jesus freeing people of demonic possession (you may not want to consider it...but it's very much a part of the Biblical account and it was very much something that was an accepted reality in Jesus' day), and those eight were only the ones that were specifically spoken of. And then there is the ability to resurrect those who have died: there are three times that we are told that Jesus was able to do this (and that doesn't include his own resurrection) (Mark 5:21-43, Luke 7:11-17, John 11:1-44).

Take that sort of a record and consolidate it into a three year time period, even in the world that existed prior to social media (or even TV or radio), and what you have is someone who is showing beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he deserves...at least a deeper dive into his claim of being the son of man; of being God.

It is during this deeper dive that we discover that Jesus claimed that he was able to forgive sins (Matthew 9:1-7), that he was lord of the Sabbath (and therefore not bound by any religious constrictions) (Mark 2:27-28), that he would be able to give eternal life (John 10:27-28), that he could see the future – 'but on the third day, I will rise' (Luke 18:31-33), that he pre-existed the world (John 17:5), and, in case you weren't sure if he was picking up the mantle, that he was the Messiah (Mark 14:61-62).

And if none of that evidence or any of those claims hold any weight for you, you have his followers, who not only went out and said it was true, but showed that it was through their own faithful living (which absolutely included miraculous moments as well).

Who do you say Jesus is?

Because Jesus is saying (and showing) that he is God.

So that puts us, and all people who are willing to look at the Biblical record with anything more than a cursory glance, in a place of having three options: seeing Jesus as telling the truth, as the largest liar in the history of all humanity, or as insane. There is no middle ground of having Jesus as some sort of a 'really good guy'.

CS Lewis, an incredibly influential Christian thinker (who also happened to author 'The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe', and 'The Screwtape Letters') articulated it this way in his work entitled 'Mere Christianity': *'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 sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the 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.'*

So hearing who Jesus say who he is (plus a little bit of contextual commentary) (as I set it up, our question number 2), how does that affect who you say Jesus is (our question number 1)?

If you are in the category of seeing Jesus as a liar or insane, well, the rest of the sermon is not for you.

If you are in the place saying, at any level, that Jesus is God, then what is about to be said is very much for you because our question 3, now carries so much more weight. Jesus says that he is God. We affirm that Jesus is God. Who does Jesus say that we are?

Jesus says that we are all infinitely valuable sons and daughters of God.

Even as Jesus claims his identity as being divine, the mystery of the Trinity is perpetually on display as Jesus continually points to a Creator, a Father whose love for his children is so great that he will do all that it takes within His character to be in relationship with them. The Creator of all that we know made each and every one of us. He knows us and made us to be in relationship with Him.

And then sin got in the way and separated us from God.

But the Creator did not just write off His creation as a lost cause.

He kept reaching out to and through His creation to show us glimpses of the relationship that He longed to have from before the beginning of time (and yes, I am very much referring to the Old Testament here). We are the sons and daughters of God.

But all of those efforts were not enough to bridge the gap that was created by the brokenness of sin.

But there was a way...to have God be born into the flesh, to live and die and be raised again. That life of Jesus shows just how valuable we are to the Creator. This sacrificial love frees us from the burden of sin so that we might be able to freely choose to be in relationship with God and become the version of

ourselves that God created us to be...or not...which is the tug of war that we still feel ourselves to be in (even though the victory has already been secured...o the joy of perspective).

Question number 1: who do you say Jesus is?

Question 2: who did Jesus say he was?

Question 3: who does Jesus say that you are?

Which leads us to our second passage (what a long and winding road, right?!). And since we've waited (with bated breath) this long, I shall not make you wait any longer!

Romans 12:1-2

12I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

'Do not be conformed to (or for that matter by) this world'.

Just because the sacrifice of Jesus may have freed us from sin does not mean that we continue to wander through our lives pretending that we don't know who Jesus is: he's told us. He's shown us. Now we have the opportunity to embrace and be embraced by a relationship with Jesus. Who do you say that Jesus is? Are you interested living a life that really lives in that reality? Because Jesus is. And this is not about being a faithful church-goer. Going to church does not and will never equal or replace a relationship with Jesus, regardless of the importance that any particular church may have said that it is. Church attendance and whatnot is a response to the relationship with Jesus, not a replacement for it.

Who do you say that Jesus is? Not me, or the people you respect, but you. If you see him as God, now is the perfect time to begin to live a life that embraces it.

Put any ambiguity away: go all in and start knocking on that door!

After Sermon Prayer

Holy God, Jesus has told us who he is, he has shown who he is, now will we acknowledge that truth and fully be embraced by the relationship that he longs to have with all of us. God, as we enter into this season of Lent, prepare us to embrace that relationship, thereby stepping away from the influence of the world, and allowing Your light to shine, truly shine. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.