

Sunday 11th October 2020

Readings: Phil 2:1-11; Ephesians 1:3-14 Hymns: 162, 346, 975

Subject: Christ

Theme: Christ and Him crucified

Key Sentence: Why Christ and Him Crucified?

1. We have redemption through His blood
2. We have the forgiveness of sins
3. We have access to God

Prayer

Lord and Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Word and we pray that as we look into it, you will open our hearts and minds to the truths contained in it. Amen

Many of you may remember the original family TV Quiz Show called 'Family Fortunes'. The basis of the show was to try and guess the most popular answer against the survey of 100 people. One of the catch phrases that came to mind was 'Our Survey Said...'

Surveys can be quite helpful and used in the right context can give us an idea of what people think and believe. They are used widely in politics and very much linked with our shopping habits.

However they can have some surprises as did the results of a survey I read about recently. Unsurprisingly, this survey was from America where it was reported that...

'a third of evangelicals in America say they just think Jesus was a teacher and not the Messiah,

The survey gave a point of clarification - the definition of 'Evangelicals' is people who hold the Bible as their highest authority, are keen to evangelise and believe in Jesus as the only way to salvation.

The 'State of Theology' survey found 44% also agreed with the statement, 'Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God' - suggesting they believe Jesus was created and not creator and God himself.

The conclusion made by the survey compilers was as follows ...

"This is a time for Christians to study Scripture diligently, engage confidently with people in our culture, and witness fearlessly to the identity and saving work of Jesus Christ in the gospel."

Hence the subject this morning as quoted by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:23 is ...

'but we preach Christ crucified:...'

Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said,

"The motto of all true servants of God must be, 'We preach Christ; and him crucified.' A sermon without Christ in it is like a loaf of bread without any flour in it. No Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home, and never preach again until you have something worth preaching."

So before we take a brief look at this vast topic '**Why Christ and Him crucified?**' let us deal with the two false teachings, maybe even heresy, from the survey.

First, *Jesus was a great teacher and not the Messiah.*

You will recall that 'Messiah' is a Hebrew word translated into Greek as '*Christos*' or Christ and means 'anointed one', or 'chosen one'.

Priests in the Old Testament were anointed with oil to show that they were set apart for service to God. It was a sign that God had

chosen them to be separate. He had consecrated them for the work they had been given to do.

So Jesus was the anointed one - Jesus Christ - as John calls him in his writings and so also does Paul in his.

To confirm this, in John 1:41 it tells us that the fisherman Andrew, after meeting Jesus, went to get his brother Peter. We read ...

'The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).'

Now the Jewish people at the time of Christ had been waiting for God to send the Messiah - a chosen one. They knew the prophecies in the Old Testament; that God would send the Messiah to overcome their enemies.

BUT the Jews misunderstood!

They were looking for a warrior who would deliver them from the Roman empire, a political solution to their problem. They had missed the point. The Messiah was not a political saviour but a Spiritual one that would conquer sin and Satan.

Fortunately, not all the Jews were blind and some saw that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah - the chosen one who would save the people from their sin.

At Caesarea Philippi, Peter also confirms who Jesus is. In Mark 8:29 Jesus questions him.

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." (or "Messiah.")

Jesus Himself was very clear about who He was. The Jews would have been familiar with the Old Testament incident where Moses met God at the burning bush. Moses wanted to know who was sending him to rescue the people in captivity. We read in Exodus 3:14 ...

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

In John 8:58 Jesus is having a discussion with the Pharisees about who He said He was...

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

The Jews should have recognised Him and welcomed Him with open arms - instead they tried to stone Him and eventually they crucified Him.

So Jesus **was** a teacher. He told about 40 parables, we have the Sermon on the Mount, and also his teaching in the synagogue. But He was more than that - He is also the anointed one, the chosen one - He is the Messiah.

Moving on to our second issue, '*Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God.*' -

So where do we start. The beginning is usually a good place. In John 1:1 we read...

*'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him **all things** were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.'*

Notice how John tells us all things were made through the Word! He goes on to emphasise that without the Word nothing was made that has been made.

So who is the Word? John 1:14 states ...

'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.'

Jesus is the Word and He existed with God before the creation of the world. Paul says in Colossians 1:14-16 ...

'He (The Son) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.'

And just to clarify 'firstborn', in these verses, does not mean that Jesus was created or born.

The word *prōtotokos* (*pro-tat-o-cus*) in Greek means preeminent one; in the same way that a firstborn in a family would have the largest stake of rule and inheritance, it's the same way with Christ.

Look again at what Paul said ,

'all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.'

This is not how you would describe someone who has been born, or of someone who has been created, because to be born is to be created.

A quick look at the other beginning - Genesis 1:1-3 - we have God, we have the Spirit of God hovering over the water and we also have God speaking creation - **the Word**.

So Jesus was God before the creation of the world, He created it all. He became fully man at His incarnation, still fully God and fully man - to be the sacrifice for our sins at Calvary.

One commentator says,

'A created Jesus will not do. A created Jesus cannot save you from your sins. A created Jesus cannot die in your place. You cannot be credited with the perfect righteousness of a created Jesus, and so to be very clear. ~ A being created by God is not God. There's only one God in the universe, and Jesus is God, the Father is God, the Spirit is God, always existing NOT created.'

So moving on then - **Why is Christ and Him crucified** important?

The introduction to John Piper's book - *'The Passion of Jesus Christ'* states the following...

The most important questions anyone can ask are: Why was Jesus Christ crucified? Why did he suffer so much? What has this to do with me? Finally, who sent him to his death? The answer to the last question is that God did. Jesus was God's Son. The suffering was unsurpassed, but the whole message of the Bible leads to this answer.

Why did Christ suffer and die? The central issue of Jesus' death is not the cause, but the meaning - God's meaning.

The book contains fifty reasons why Jesus came to die. We will look at just three things.

1. We have - redemption through His blood
2. We have - The forgiveness of sins
3. We have - access to God

Firstly, we have redemption through His blood.

In our second reading Ephesians 1, we see the first two points in verse 7

'In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace' (repeat)

If you look closely, the whole passage is about Christ -
'in Christ', 'in Him', 'through Jesus Christ', 'in the One He loves'

And why is this? - *'to the praise of His glory' (v12 & 14)*

So firstly, we have redemption through His blood. Calvary is where Jesus' blood was shed for us - his sacrificial death - was a death He went to freely.

Redemption or to redeem is to 'buy back'. If you take your gold pocket watch or diamond ring to a pawn shop you get money for it and also a ticket that allows you to buy it back at a later date.

Or if you collected Green Shield stamps or Co-op stamps you could redeem them for something from the gift catalogue.

I don't suppose that anyone here has been kidnapped but if you had a ransom demand would have been made.

Another false teaching is that Satan had to be paid off so that sinners could be save. Absolutely not! The situation for Satan when Christ was crucified was not payment BUT defeat!

Hebrews 2:14 says,

'So that by his death he might destroy him who hold the power of death-that is, the devil'

There was no negotiation!

Romans 3:23 states that...

'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'

We are all sinners and we have to pay the price for that sin. But God who is holy, who could judge us and rightly condemn us, is also a God of love and mercy. **He** paid the price, **He** paid the fee, **He** bought us back, **He** redeemed us - through the blood of Christ on the cross. Jesus' life was the ransom payment. Mark 10:45 tells us...

'For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

Secondly - we have forgiveness of sin.

Jesus told his disciples at the Last Supper in Matthew 26:28,

'This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'

God is a just God, if He were to say to us sinners, 'It's Ok, don't worry about it, I forgive you, .', then, as in our Law Court, justice would not have been done.

All sin is serious to God and the injury done to God's glory must be repaired. This takes us to why Christ suffered and died. The Judge of all, God Himself paid the fine, He paid the penalty Himself through the shedding of Christ's blood.

John Piper says,

'Forgiveness costs us nothing. All our costly obedience is the fruits, not the roots, of being forgiven. That's why we call it grace. But it cost Jesus His life. That is why we call it just.'

'Oh how precious is the news that God does not hold our sins against us! And how beautiful is Christ whose blood made it right for God to do this.'

Romans 6:23 reminds us...

'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

We are forgiven!!

And finally, we have access to God (*Heb 10:19-20*)

We read in Hebrews 10:19ff

'Therefore brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body.'

The children of Israel, under the guidance of Moses, after they had left Egypt, were given strict instructions on how to construct and erect the tabernacle.

The tabernacle in the desert was the place where God met with his people and people worshipped their God. However, the tabernacle was a copy or shadow, a picture of what was to come.

Only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies once a year to make a sacrifice. The way was blocked by a huge curtain.

In Matthew 27:50 we are told,

'...when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom...'

So now, we can come before God with confidence, through Christ. He has made the way. The High Priests of the Old Testament could only go once a year, on behalf of the people. Now we can approach anytime, without fear, knowing that the blood of Christ is all sufficient.

As believers we can come to Him. Non-believers can come to God through Christ, repenting of sin and asking for forgiveness.

1 John 1:9 states,

'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.'

Is the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, your Saviour?

If He is, thank Him, praise Him and Worship Him for all that He has done.

If He is not, now is the time to turn from your sin, and ask for His forgiveness, which He will give to those who truly believe.

In Lou Fellingham's song 'Christ Crucified', the refrain goes as follows...

*We preach Christ crucified,
It's the only way for souls to be saved who have gone astray
We preach Christ raised to life and now He reigns
Interceding for us till He comes again*

Amen