

Who is this Christ?

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Date: 15 June 2008

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[0 : 0 0] But nonetheless it's a great question that Herod asks in verse 9. He said, Who then is this? I hear such things about. So Herod asks a very pertinent question.

And as we have been going through Luke's Gospel, that's what we've been examining. We've been looking at this Gospel, as Luke as a doctor has presented methodically and reasonably and in an investigative way to open up to us who Jesus is so that we know and so that we learn more about him. So Herod asks a great question. Who then is this? I hear such things about.

And maybe you think today, ah, he's not going to say more about Jesus. I know, I know with what Jesus, who Jesus is and what he's about. I can't learn anything new from the Gospels about Jesus.

Well, I hope that that's not our attitude. However long we may have been Christians because we looked last Sunday night at the importance of holiness and we took a text from Second Peter which says, grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ. Always grow. And that is a great description of how we become holy as we grow more and more in understanding about Jesus. And we do need to let scripture, the Bible, mould our impression of who Jesus is rather than maybe just what we think in our own minds or what we have concluded in our own minds. Luke already has made it outstandingly clear to us who Jesus is, that he is entirely unique, that he's a unique person, that he was born in a unique way, that he was the unique answer to prophecy, that he has come with good news, the good news that we share, the good news that we live, the good news that we enjoy as Christians, that he ushers in the kingdom of God, that he has the power of God, the authority of God, the compassion of God, the healing of God, the strength of God to overcome evil and death.

We saw that last week in the chapter that we read. And as we go on and look and as we have learned as Christians that the gospel of Jesus Christ and the message of Jesus Christ and the salvation of Jesus Christ, which is symbolized in the baptism and the washing that baptism symbolizes is uniquely precious to us. There's no other way. There's nothing we can add to it. There's nothing that we can put alongside it. That what Jesus uniquely has come to do is to provide a way for us back to God through the cross. And he simply wants us to accept his gift of salvation. These are very precious truths to us, aren't they? That he does the work. The work is finished when he said on the cross, it is finished. One big Greek word he said. That was true. The work is done. The way has been opened. The salvation has been worked out. He has paid the price for our sin. And we simply accept that and live in the knowledge of his love and his grace and his acceptance when we make him our Lord and Saviour. These are precious truths, important truths. And I'm stressing the truth of God's finished work in Christ for one reason. Because I'm going to ask another question. And I'm going to ask what is Jesus then doing here in this chapter? Luke is unfolding who Jesus is. And we know by faith who Jesus is and we have accepted his salvation. We can't add to it. We can't earn it.

[4 : 1 1] We can't go to God in the last day and say, I've done this, that and the next thing. Because it's through Jesus Christ and what he has done. But what then is Jesus doing here in this chapter?

Well, what he's doing is he is delegating his work. I know that the work of salvation is Christ's.

But nonetheless, in terms of this ongoing kingdom work, he is delegating it to his disciples who are the foundation of the New Testament church. The twelve disciples found the New Testament church just as the twelve tribes and the twelve sons were the Old Testament church. So we have here the twelve disciples, verses one to nine, that passage where Jesus sends them out, sends them out with authority, sends them out with power, and he sends them out with the good news, the preaching evangelistic message of the gospel. And he's delegating his work to them in these nine verses. We saw last week that the focus is moving a little bit away from the crowds in Luke 1 to 8 now to the disciples and what he's teaching them and telling them and educating them about. And here he's sending them out. He is delegating the kingdom work, the message of the gospel to his disciples and by inference to the church of which they are the founder members.

Christ is soon to die. He will be raised on the third day and in forty days he will ascend back to heaven. So he is giving over this work of the gospel amazingly to the church. He wants us to share this gospel message and in many ways we fulfill that today. In baptism I read the great commission from Matthew 28 at the beginning about making, keeping disciples, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. That is the task that we've been given. You know, I think he makes it more clear that he hands over this work cooperatively in John chapter 17, his great prayer for the church. And what he says, as you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. And in verse 22 he says, I have given them the glory that you gave to me so that they may be one as we are one. So he gives the glory to the church. He gives the message to the church. He gives the authority to the church to spread the kingdom news, to tell people about the gospel.

And that is what he's doing here. He's delegating that work. And so for us today it's a reminder of the great privilege we have in being Christians. Not just ministers, it's not just for ministers and elders. For every single Christian we have this amazing privilege. Having come to Christ and accepted Christ, we have the most significant of tasks to perform on our day to day life, is to live be ambassadors for and share the gospel message of Jesus Christ. What a task we have to do and to share that we are to go out with the authority of Christ and live under His authority and His Lordship and preach or share or pass on the message. For God so loved the world that He gave is one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

[8 : 02] That's the message that we have. That is the life that we are to live and we are a sent people. You are a sent person. Doesn't that give you a great sense of privilege that we are a missional people that you know when we've been chosen by Christ and saved by Christ we have this important privilege to perform that we have a message that nobody else has, that we have a life that nobody else can live because it's a life that's lived in the strength of Jesus Christ. We have a great message and a great life to live. It's not something we deserve but it's not something that He looks at and says, well I'll give the top 10% of the people in the church. I'll give them that privilege because they're really special. No, it's not on any merit. It's because He has simply loved us, saved us and given us all that privilege to reach out with the gospel. I don't know if some of you any of you really watch the television or watch things like that but just watching the apprentice you know and seeing at the end of that you're hired and He's hired the one out of what 15 or 16 of people after 12 weeks and been torn apart and examined. I'll show you, you're hired. He's hired on merit. He's hired because He was never in the boardroom. He's hired because you know He did well in every task. He's hired because He's a rough diamond, whatever you want to look. He's hired.

He's earned it. He's made it to the place of getting 100K a year. God says to us, you're hired but it's not on the basis of our merit, of our effort, of our good works, of our willingness to serve because we can use what we have and He chooses us on that basis.

We are hired simply by His grace and we all have that privilege. It's not a case of the odd one or two. We all have that unique privilege and that's what our life is about my friends as Christians. We don't have long. It's a special privilege that we have, one that even the angels don't share, one that we wouldn't be able to enjoy in glory when we get there for the short time to share by our life and by our witness and by telling people the good news of Jesus Christ. He has given us that great privilege and that's what He's doing here with the 12 disciples as He sends them out as they represent the church and that's a great privilege. It's also a great responsibility.

He says to them, people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet where you leave their town as a testimony against them. It's a responsibility to live as Christians and to share the significance of being a Christian and to weigh on people's minds the solemnity of rejecting Jesus. It leaves them without hope and in a sensitive and a prayerful way we are to do that, recognizing that what we have is real. You know, it's not just putty. It's not make-believe. It's not just easy-believe. It's changed our lives, transformed us and the acceptance of Christ or the rejection of Christ is life and death and so there's a responsibility. But also there's a great confidence we can have in Him in Jesus. You know, the disciples had confidence in Jesus as He went out with this message, you know, because we've seen the lead-up in the previous chapters. It's not without reason the order that Luke gives us because they themselves had been called. They had been changed. They had been touched by His grace. They had seen His power and His authority over illness and disease and even death and they were confident that He would equip them as indeed He does here with power and authority. You know, if we have received good news, if we have seen Christ at work in our lives and in the lives of those around us, it gives us a great motivation and a great confidence to share that with others, doesn't it? If we are part of a church that is seeing Christ working in people's lives, transforming people, people coming in who don't know Jesus and in coming to faith in Jesus and accepting the good news, that focuses us more than anything that I can do or anything that leadership can do or anything that we can think about in a kind of leadership model way, it's the best thing. It's the best thing for keeping us focused on who we are and what we're to do. Very often a stagnant church and a stagnant Christian who isn't seeing any of these things and who isn't aware of the privilege and responsibility that we have, we become sidetracked.

We don't have confidence in Christ. We don't believe Christ can change people's lives because, you know, why is He going to change someone else's life if He's not changing mine? You know, so if Christ isn't affecting our lives, then it's difficult for us to have confidence that He will affect other people's lives and change their lives. And so when we're stagnant, it means that we're less than confident and yet these disciples were confident because He had provided and He had shown Himself to be the one who changed their lives. And can I just say this on a side here, that we can be confident in Jesus because He knows our needs. And I think this is very important, you see. He knows our needs and He wants us to trust Him. There's this section here where the disciples go out and they're not to take staff or a bag or bread or money or an extra tunic or anything like that.

[14:13] And I think simply, Jesus is there challenging them to trust Him. They're to go out first with the gospel, with the message, and He says, don't worry about these other things. It's not that they're not important, but I'll provide for you. Now if you scroll on in your Bible reading to Luke chapter 22 and verse 35, Jesus asked them, when I sent you out without scroll or without sandals or without tunic, did you lack anything? They said, no, we lacked nothing. He provided for them. They didn't lack, it wasn't as if they were just aesthetic and they were minimalist and He didn't give them anything. He provided for them. He provided shelter and clothing and food. It was a it was an active demonstration of trust. It was an exercise in trust. And we know that He knows their needs because after they had done that work, we told that in verse 18, sorry, in verse 10, the apostles returned, they reported Jesus what He'd done, then He took them with them and they would draw by themselves to a town by saying, He knew they needed rest. And then in the story, we're going to look at in a minute, just for a few moments, the people, 5,000 people and more were hearing Jesus teaching all day. Jesus knew they needed food, so He knows about our needs.

You know, He knows we're not just kind of robotic, spiritual soul beings that don't need rest and food and shelter and clothing and provision. He knows we're body and soul. And He was, He was encouraging here the disciples to trust Him about that. He knows what we're like. He knows that we need to laugh and that we need to cry and that we need to celebrate and that we need to be human and that we need to eat and that we need to sleep and that we need in all that as body and soul to serve. So He knows us and that gives us confidence in my hope that your confidence is in Jesus Christ today, I really do. So He's gone out there and He is giving the church this tremendous role.

He's delegating His work. Now briefly, can I also just by looking at the second parable, or this not second parable, but the second miracle, or the miracle here, say something about His work.

Because what comes clear in this miracle is that His work that He asked us to do as Christians is impossible. It's impossible. It's miserable. It's impossible. He's given us something to do we can't do. You know the disciples are there, there's a big crowd, there's 5,000 men, which means there's probably about 10,000 people all together. And they've been taught all day by Him and the disciples are tired and I think they're probably, although it doesn't say, they're probably a little bit fed up and He says, Jesus please send them home now. They've got a long way to go and they'll need to get an accommodation and bed and breakfast. You know how expensive it is here. Send them off and Jesus says, what does Jesus say to them? Jesus replied, You give them something to eat.

You feed them, that's what He says. That's the work He gives them to do. It's utterly impossible task. They haven't earned the money to be able to pay for the food. They haven't the time. There's probably a shop that's not the run out of bread by that stage of the day. It's impossible task.

[17:48] You feed them, Jesus says. You do it. He asks them to do something utterly impossible. The crowd are hungry, really hungry. So it's not just, you know, it's not just like a wee sweet would do them. They're something substantial. There's just no way that they can do that. You know, that's absolutely true, isn't it? The Christian life and the demands of Christ on us, the privileges He gives us are utterly impossible. To be a Christian, it's impossible.

It's impossible to love God in our own strength. It's impossible today to worship Him. It's impossible to obey Him. It's impossible for us to deny sin and to evangelize, to share the good news.

And we live our lives, don't we, with that struggle. But Lord, you're asking me to do something I can't do. I'm struggling to do. I've got all kinds of issues that I can't deal with here.

I'm full of doubt. I'm full of my life not looking like what it ought to look like in Scripture. All kinds of problems that we feel make it impossible. And I'm saying good, because it's the impossibility of grace. Because there's a great danger, I think, for us today in reducing Christianity to manageable tasks. To kind of being nice with a religious flavor. That, you know, something that anyone could do. Just being nice people and then coming along the church now and again. And that's what being a Christian is. Something that's easy and manageable. Something that we can cope with. But it's something that is not biblical and is not Christianity. Because Christianity is word dead spiritually without Christ who brings us to life. It never gets beyond the skin. A conceptual Christianity or a moralistic Christianity. A do good, you know, upright moral life with a kind of vague belief in God. Now, these things are all okay in their own strength, but they're not Christianity. And it's right that the tasks he asks us to do, the life he asks us to live, is an impossible one. You feed them, he says. Go on, you do it.

They didn't have the resources. They just didn't. Bread and fish. That's all they had. Five loaves of bread and two fish. They didn't have what it took. Imagine trying to divide that out 10,000 people. They're lesion of crumb each. You wouldn't even get a fish. Born. Tiny, tiny.

[20 : 30] Wouldn't provide. It's impossible. So what is Jesus teaching us then and teaching the disciples from this miracle? Well, he's reminding us that in faith as Christians, we're asked to give him all that we do have. You know, that's the great thing here about the disciples, isn't it? They didn't say, oh, that's hopeless then. And just go home. They didn't do that. They didn't say, oh, come on, Jesus Christ. Can you not make it simpler? They said, well, look, all we have here is five loaves and two fish. And that's a, we learned from one of the other gospels. It's a picnic of a little boy. That's all we have. But, you know, we bring it to you. That's what they did, you know, all they had was five and two. And yet they brought it to him. And that's a great lesson for us that in faith, that's what Christ wants from us. He wants what we do have. We accept salvation from him. It's a free gift. And in return, he just asked for our lives, for our trust, to dedicate what we do have, even though we think it's rubbish or little or insignificant.

Give it over to him and let him use it. We may feel very ordinary today. We may feel very untalented. I feel that. And it's a great lesson to know that I can take that. And that Christ, as an act of faith, wants me simply to give what I, what he has given me naturally to him and ask him to use it.

That's all he requires of us to take what we are, having accepted salvation from him and give it to him, give our lives in prayer and obedience to him. And what happens when we do that? He transforms it.

That's what happens. That's what this miracle is about. Him transforming us as ordinary people and our obedient willingness in response to His grace. He will transform it so that our lives are satisfying to Him. You know, I think it must have been, I would have loved to have been a disciple there, going round with all the bread and all the fish and just being so satisfied to see it being replenished, to see the people say, Oh, this is great. I'm really hungry. And there's plenty of this. And for the and for the crowd to be satisfied and the disciples to be satisfied as they mingled with this massive, massive group of people, how satisfying must that have been as they used this insignificant amount of food and God used it to His glory. So little, so unlikely, but they were satisfied at the unfolding work of God. And you know, if we go out with what He has given us, we've got salvation, but He just gives us ourselves, you know, we don't need to look at others and be envious of Him, just with the little we have and just serve Him. And it's amazing how satisfied we will be as we see God using that.

You know, this church doesn't need geniuses. Now, I spent, I spent ages on the Internet looking at whether it's geniuses or genie. I think it's geniuses. The church doesn't need geniuses.

[23 : 46] It needs servants, you know. And if we are servants, then we will be satisfied. That's who that's what He uses. Servants, because not only will it be satisfied, it will be miraculous. Our life will be undoubtably, this is a miracle, a clear, evidential miracle. Five loaves, two fish, multiplied to feed probably 10,000 people, an outstanding miracle from God the Son.

And the message behind that too for us is as we go out and message to the disciples, is as we go out, our lives will be miraculous in the sense of our lives being a miracle of grace.

We, I believe we will see answered prayer in our lives in a miraculous way when we are in relationship with Him and serving Him. We will see the healing of broken hearts in a way that is simply miraculous of bitterness dissolved, of situations flattened that were like mountains or like walls, finance provided, doors of opportunity opened. It's the glory of a simple, it's the glory of Newton, of Carmichael, of Mueller, of Hudson Taylor, of any of these great guys and women that you look at and read about, and they weren't extraordinary people. They were people with five loaves and two fish who gave wholeheartedly their lives to Christ, and who saw outstanding miracles in their lives. And I also think lastly, it will be extravagant when we serve them this way. The disciples had a basket each, each of them had that basket filled, there's 12 baskets left over, I think that's significant, one for each of them, so that they learned a lesson of Christ's extravagance, so that they could feel the weight of His extravagance and the marvel of His miracle, and that they would know how extravagant He is. And that's the law of grace, isn't it? It's the law of kingdom. We make God a miser. We make Him just typefisted and we make Him ogre and we make Him unwilling to give, and yet He's this lavish, loving, giving God. And the law of the kingdom is that He multiplies the little that we have by grace. He multiplies it massively and is extravagant, so that the kingdom work and the gospel work and the ministry work is not about our natural abilities, but it's about the law of grace. God taking what we humbly offer in gratitude and multiplying it and empowering us and giving us the authority to serve Him. It's wonderful, you know, it's marvelous. It's great to learn from

Jesus Christ and to know what He is teaching us about serving Him. What a saviour, what a great thing to belong to Him. How wonderful it is to be in the kingdom of grace. I hope that you are challenged by that if you don't belong to Jesus Christ. You're challenged by the message that you'll be challenged by the baptism that speaks of His cleansing, speaks of covenant, speaks of hopes and promises and the plans and patterns of God for our children, and that we will remember as a congregation to teach Alexander and to teach our children and to share with them this great gospel and to live it, and to show them this kind of faith, not a dry, cerebral dull, Sunday religion, but something real, something passionate, something vibrant, something that they will long for for themselves as they find out more about Jesus Christ. He has given us this kingdom work in which we share and it is a wonderful privilege. And sacrament today is a wonderful privilege to witness and to participate in and we look forward to that sacrament very shortly. Amen. May God bless to us our study of His word and may the Holy Spirit take His truth and His promises and His teaching and apply them to our hearts.