

The Most Important Encounter of All

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[0 : 00] The reading from which the sermon is based today is Luke chapter 3, verses 21 and 22. and Luke chapter 4, verses 14 to 21.

And let's read together the Word of God. Now, when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened.

And the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.

In chapter 4, verse 14. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. And a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

[0 : 58] And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed. To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

And he rolled up the scroll, and he gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

This is God's holy word. Well, I want to say a huge thank you to Corey, and to you all for your warm welcome this morning. It's such a privilege to be back here again today.

Both Una and I love, love the opportunity to come and worship with you. And so many of you are such dear friends to us, and many of you we have not met and got to know, but it's such a joy to see you here, and to get to know you as well.

[2 : 04] So thank you so much for this opportunity. It's such a privilege to be here. And we're going to turn back to Luke chapter 4. And let me just read these verses that are on the screen.

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he'd been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he's anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Over the summer, you've had a series called Encounters with Jesus, and I was delighted to be part of that series back in July. Today we come to the end of this series, and we're just going to ask the question, what's the most important counter of all?

Who is that encounter with? That's what I want us to think about as we look at God's Word together today. But I need to explain that my sermon's not really going to follow the normal pattern.

[3 : 13] My sermon's actually going to be very, very short. My sermon's only going to be 10 minutes long, but my introduction's going to be about 20 minutes long. So it's going to be lots of introduction, then super short sermon at the end of it.

Hopefully it's all going to make sense. This is the target that we're trying to get to, the most important encounter of all. Now when I was here serving as assistant minister, I was alongside Derek Lamont.

Many of you will know Derek. He served here for over 20 years, and Derek and Katina had a wonderful ministry, blessed by the Lord. Derek has many, many amazing gifts for ministry.

One of Derek's gifts is that he was very, very good at making up words. And that rubbed off on me, and I am going to introduce you to a word that is going to form the basis of the big, long introduction that I'm going to give, and I hope it's going to help us answer our question about the most important encounter of all.

And the word I've made up is the word anointianity. Okay? So you're going to learn today all about anointianity. It's a weird-sounding word. Let me tell you what it means. Well, it's just an alternative for the word Christianity.

[4 : 27] And the reason I've made up this version is because the word Christ in Greek is the word that means anointed one. So Christ is a Greek word.

It comes from the Greek word for anointing, which is the word chrio. And so in Greek, Christ and anointed, it's more or less the same word. It's exactly the same word family. And you actually see that very clearly in the Bible.

Let me put up an example verse. It says, It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us. Now, I'm just picking this word to show you the similarities between the two Greek words. We've got Christ and anointed.

If I put the last wee bit of that verse up in Greek, I'm not amazing at Greek, but I can read it out, and you'll be able to hear what I'm trying to get at. If I read the last few words, the second half of that verse in Greek, it says, So, Christ on Christ, Christ on anointed.

There you go. It's the same word. You can see that I'm not making it up. I did make up the word, but I'm not making up the connection. And so all of this is telling us that when we think about Jesus, when we talk about Christianity, behind all of that lies this concept of being anointed, and that's why we can call the Christian faith anointianity.

[5 : 49] And I hope that this is going to be helpful for us, because in all of this series and in everything that we do, we're thinking about encountering Jesus.

But who exactly are we encountering? And what is it that is so important about it? Well, let's try and think about that together.

Jesus of Nazareth is known throughout the whole world as Jesus Christ. And that word Christ is not a surname. It's actually a title.

So we could just as easily say Jesus the Christ. And as I said, it's a Greek word. It means anointed one. The Greek word is the equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah. So you'll hear these words related to Christianity.

Messiah, Christ. All of it means anointed one. It's all referring to the same thing. It's telling us that at the heart of who Jesus is, and at the heart of why Jesus has come, is this whole concept of being anointed.

[6 : 53] What does that mean? And why is it so important? Well, the explanation for it all comes in the Old Testament. That's where the roots of this lie.

And being anointed is connected to three key roles that appear again and again throughout the Old Testament. And these roles are prophet, priest, and king.

And you see, if you look in the Old Testament, that for each of these roles, prophet, priest, and king, an individual was anointed for the task that was given to them. So I'll pop some examples up onto the screen.

Prophet, you can see Elisha anointing. Sorry, you see king. Sorry, I put the wrong verse there. You see Elisha being anointed to be prophet. And yes, sorry, I'm reading it wrong there.

So you see that there's an anointing of the king in the first verse, and an anointing of Elisha as the prophet. The instructions given to Elijah. Priest there, Exodus 40. Aaron and his sons, you shall anoint them.

[7 : 54] And then you see Saul being anointed to be king. So we see this throughout the Old Testament. Anointing is associated with these three roles.

Prophet, priest, king. And each of these was crucial in the life of Israel in the Old Testament. So what did a prophet do? A prophet functioned as God's spokesperson. So a messenger who communicated the word of God.

And often that was to issue warnings. And alongside those warnings would come an offer of salvation. The priest functioned as the people's representative before God.

And so they would serve in the temple. They'd offer sacrifices. They would intercede on behalf of a sinful people. And the king functioned as God's vice regent.

Or to use the imagery that comes up a lot in the Old Testament, the king functioned as an under-shepherd. Given responsibility, delegated by God, to care for the people.

[8 : 53] So a king stood under God, over the people. Exercising care and protection. So you've got all these things fitting together. A prophet spoke from God. A priest came to God.

And a king reigned under God, over the people. These three roles were crucial in the Old Testament. But the big emphasis of the Old Testament is that all three of these failed.

So the prophet's messages fell on deaf ears. The people didn't listen. The elaborate sacrificial system of the temple was actually never able to take away the people's sins.

And the king's constantly failed. And by the time you reach the end of the Old Testament, God has stopped sending prophets. The temple has been destroyed.

And the king has lost all his power. And instead, God's people are under the rule of foreign empires who have conquered them.

[9 : 57] So the story of the Old Testament, always remember this, the story of the Old Testament is not a story of success. It's always a story of failure. And it's meant to be a story of failure.

Because all the time, the Old Testament is telling us that we need something more. That the prophets, the priests, and the kings we've got just now are not what we really need.

And that's why the Old Testament is also always looking forward to the coming of a Savior who's going to be all three of these things. There's the anticipation of a prophet being raised up.

This is Moses speaking. God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him. There's the expectation of a priest, of a great high priest who will be able to serve forever.

You see that in Psalm 110. And there's great anticipation of a king who will be wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, the prince of peace, and of his government. There shall be no end.

[11 : 00] And so the Old Testament is looking forward to a prophet that's going to come, to a priest that's going to come, to a king that's going to come. And actually, as you get to the very end of the Old Testament, you see that there's a recognition that all three of these roles are going to be combined in one individual.

The prophecy of Zechariah is fascinating for that. I can only give you a couple of wee snippets, but if you do read the prophecy of Zechariah, look out for the ways in which it will combine prophet and king, or priest and king.

And you see examples here. I'll just read the first one because I'm already going to start running out of time. My introduction is going to be even longer than I planned. It says, Thus says the Lord of hosts, Behold the man whose name is the branch, for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord.

There's priestly language. It's he who shall build the temple and shall bear royal honor. There's kingly language, and shall sit on the ruler on his throne. There's king language again. There shall be a priest on his throne.

The council of peace shall be between them both. Same emphases in Zechariah 9, and throughout that book, prophet, priest, and king combined in the one person. And of course, you know who all of this is talking about.

[12 : 06] It's all fulfilled magnificently in Jesus Christ. And so, when Jesus speaks about him being anointed, there is a ton of Old Testament theology behind that term.

And it's telling us that he is the one in whom everything that the Old Testament is looking forward to finds its fulfillment. And the rest of the New Testament confirms this again and again and again.

A good example is Hebrews 1. Sorry that it's a long passage, but let me just whiz through it because you're going to see all three. Long ago, at many times, in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days, he's spoken to us by his son.

There's prophecy, prophet. He appointed all things through whom he also created the world. He's the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature. He upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, there's priestly language.

He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. This is pointing us towards kingly language and that gets emphasized. I'll skip out the bits, but you'll see at the end of the sun, it says, your throne, O God, is forever and ever. There's king language.

[13 : 14] Prophet, priest, and king, all fulfilled and accomplished in Jesus. So, you need to remember these categories. Maybe you've known them a long, long time, but they're so important to the whole concept of Jesus' identity as the Christ.

He's prophet, priest, and king. And the reason they're so important is that it's these offices that come together to enable Jesus to serve as the mediator between God and humanity.

Now, that word mediator is a big, big theological term for us. It's so important. It's what Jesus does. So, he's the prophetic revelation from God.

So, information, communication, revelation from God comes to us through Jesus. He's the priest who gives us access to God. So, you can see both directions at play here.

And he's the king of God's kingdom. So, every aspect of our lives is under his rule. And, of course, the reason why Jesus can do this, why Jesus can be the mediator between God and humanity, is because he is God and he is one of us.

[14 : 22] And that's what's captured again in the New Testament. There's one mediator between God and man, the man, Christ, Jesus. That's what makes Jesus unique. Only he can fulfill these roles.

The prophets, priests, and kings of the Old Testament failed. And, the false prophets, false priests, and temporary kings that humanity has chased after and put their hope in throughout history have failed.

Only Jesus can fulfill these roles. But, what's even more important to recognize, maybe, is that Jesus doesn't just take up these roles. He takes them to a whole new level.

Because, Jesus doesn't just communicate on God's behalf as a messenger. No, Jesus' very words are the words of God.

When he speaks, God speaks. And, Jesus doesn't just offer a sacrifice on behalf of the people like the priests did. Jesus is the sacrifice on behalf of his people.

[15 : 33] people. And, Jesus doesn't just rule with a delegated authority from God. He is the one who has all authority. He is king of kings and lord of lords.

And, these roles, prophet, priest, and king, are so important for understanding Jesus as we look at him in the gospel. All the different people we've seen encounter Jesus are meeting the great prophet, priest, and king.

And, in Jesus' ministry, you actually see what we could call a progressive intensification of these roles. And, so, Jesus the prophet engages in a ministry of proclamation.

And, so, he goes around preaching, teaching more and more and more. And, that message is accompanied by miracles which function to attest the authenticity of what Jesus is saying.

Jesus the priest sets his face towards Jerusalem. And, so, as you go through the gospels, you discover very quickly that actually the whole of these gospels are focused on Jesus reaching the cross when he's going to accomplish the great work of atonement.

[16 : 38] And, then, the whole of the gospels culminate in Jesus rising from the dead and in the resurrection we see Jesus the king rising from the dead with unstoppable power.

The king has conquered. He's victorious. He rules over all. And, so, what he was anointed to accomplish becomes his perfect finished work.

And, maybe the best summary of this comes in one of the most famous Bible verses of all when Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus the priest is the way to God. It's through him that we get to God. Jesus the prophet reveals the truth from God. And, Jesus the king gives us eternal life in his kingdom and there is no other.

No other mediator between God and humanity. No one comes to the Father except through him. Now, there's loads more that we could say about this. These are massive theological topics.

[17 : 48] I'm only halfway through my introduction so we've got to keep moving forward. In all of this stuff, why is this all being placed under the framework of being anointed?

Like, why is anointed the thing that God wants to do in revealing Jesus? Well, I think there's two, at least two reasons why this is so crucial. First of all, we need to recognize that the Bible's, that anointing is the Bible's way of saying it's him.

Anointing is the Bible's way of saying it's him. In other words, it's a key mark of identification. Now, we still do the same thing. We just don't use oil. We use other stuff. So, when somebody wins the Olympics, we anoint them with a gold medal.

When you become the captain of a football team or a sports team, you get anointed with an armband. And when you're the bride at a wedding, you get anointed with a dress that no one else is wearing.

And all of these are ways in which we say it's him. It's her. Anointing identifies who we are.

[18 : 51] And the key point with Jesus is that when it comes to finding answers, when it comes to finding hope, finding healing, finding purpose, finding truth, finding eternal life, the anointing of Jesus as the Christ is all there to tell us it's him.

it's him that we need. He's the one that we've been waiting for and it's telling you that if you look past Jesus or if you look somewhere else, you're making the wrong decision.

You're picking the wrong one. And alongside that mark of identification, the Bible also associates anointing with power.

You see that in Acts 10 38. There's just a summary about Jesus. It says, God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil for God was with him.

Jesus, the anointed prophet, priest, and king has the power to accomplish everything that he came to do. His power is unlimited. It's unstoppable.

[20 : 02] It is completely effectual in accomplishing everything that God the Father wants him to do. So that means that the gospel doesn't just say it's him. The gospel also says it's him and he's done it.

He's done everything that is needed. And all any of us needs to do is rest on him and his perfect finished work.

Now this is so important because there are many people who, when it comes to the big questions of life and truth and salvation, many people look at Jesus and think, it's not him.

And they'll look somewhere else. They'll pick a different option. And all around us that's what people are doing. People are looking for wholeness and completeness and answers and truth and stability in other stuff.

Lots of people will look at Jesus and think, it's not him. There's another problem that people have that I think maybe more of you might have.

[21 : 12] It's not so much that you look at Jesus and you think, it's not him. It's more that you look at Jesus and you hear that he is a savior and you know that he is the Christ. You don't doubt that and you think about salvation and then you look at yourself and you think, he's not going to do it for me.

So I know it's him but he won't do it. Or maybe you think, I know it's him but he actually can't do it because I've made too many mistakes. I've stuffed up too much. Maybe you know it's him but you just think he can't do it for me.

That is never true. That is never ever true. And this whole concept of being anointed is proving that. It's telling you it's him and it's telling you he can and it's telling you he will.

No one who ever comes to him will be cast out. Now, my introduction is almost over and then we need to start our five minute sermon. there's loads loads more that I want to say about this.

I had wanted to say a wee bit about the baptism of Jesus. That's a great example of how you see God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all working together in this anointing.

[22 : 37] And so let me just summarize what I was going to say very, very briefly. In the baptism, do I have it on the screen? It's there somewhere. There we go. There's the baptism. I just want to say what you have here is you have God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit united in this concept of anointing because you have the Father anointing.

You have the Son, the anointed one, and you have the Holy Spirit, the oil of anointing that empowers and enables Jesus to accomplish his ministry.

So you have the anointer, the anointed, the anointing. You see the same passage here. God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power. The anointer, God, the anointed, the Son, the anointment, the Holy Spirit, the anointing, and it's all telling us that God, that God is utterly determined to accomplish his purposes of salvation.

And it's beautiful that it ties in with the baptism because in the baptism, Jesus was identifying himself with us, saying that he's come alongside us in order to help us.

It's teaching us that the triune God is fully invested, wholly involved, and utterly committed to your salvation. There's a ton of stuff I missed out.

[24 : 01] Just, I'll come another time and do that bit of the sermon. I want to get to the question that we started with. Introductions over sermons about to start. We've got five minutes. What's the most important encounter of all?

Or really, the question I really want to ask is, who's that encounter with? So you've seen Jesus encounter Nicodemus, you've seen him encounter the woman at the well, you've seen Jesus encounter Peter after his failure, and the passages that we read, you've got Jesus at the baptism, there's tons of people watching him, you've got Jesus at a synagogue, his whole hometown is watching what he's doing.

There are loads and loads of people encountering Jesus. What's the most important encounter of all? Or the real question I want is, who is that encounter with? I think you know what I'm going to say.

You. The most important encounter of all is Jesus' encounter with you right now. And that's what the whole of the gospel is about.

That as our new week begins, as we gather publicly to worship, Jesus is calling you to come to him, to come and encounter him, and to meet with him.

[25 : 24] And I want to say that that's the most important encounter of all, because it is the most amazing encounter of all. And I'm going to just say two very short things in our five-minute sermon at the end of our ridiculously long introduction.

The two things I want to say is that encountering Jesus as the anointed one means that our needs are met, and our possibilities are transformed. Our needs are met, and our possibilities are transformed.

In terms of our needs being met, theologians over many centuries have connected the threefold office of Jesus, the anointed one, prophet, priest, and king, they've connected that with what they've called the threefold misery of humanity.

And they've summarized that under three headings, which are going to sound very depressing. Ignorance, guilt, and tyranny. Now, these are the kind of words that sound instantly offensive, but they're very important theological terms, and the truth is these are the things you and I encounter every single week of our lives.

And so, ignorance, we find that offensive. We think that's, and it's a horrible thing to say to somebody you're ignorant. And I don't mean it in that kind of insulting way, but just as a concept, not knowing things, not knowing everything, not knowing the whole story, that is something we encounter all the time.

[26 : 54] So, sometimes we receive it from others. People judge us when they don't know what's going on in our lives. We see people that we love walking down a terrible path. We can see it, they can't.

And often, you'll find people speak with supreme confidence when all the time, you know, they're just making it up. They're talking rubbish. And so, we'll sometimes encounter ignorance among others, but maybe even more so, ignorance is something that we struggle with ourselves.

Because how often do we find ourselves saying, I don't know what to do? We're facing a situation with studies or with work or with family and we think, I don't know what to do in this situation.

I don't understand why this is happening to me. I did not think it would turn out this way. That's all part of that theological category of ignorance whereby we just don't know everything and we can't understand everything and we can't hold it all together.

And maybe, maybe the worst of, worst encounter we can have with ignorance is when we're hurt by people that we thought we knew and then we realize we didn't.

[28 : 07] Guilt, again, we don't like that word, but we can't escape its shadow. It's like, it's just, it's like, it's just always there, just niggling at us. The mistakes that we've made, the regret that crushes us, that consciousness of our sin, and that no matter how many times we try to be a better version of ourselves and to put things right, we can't escape our sense of guilt before God.

And maybe we can mask it and lots of people are trying to mask it, but the whole reason we mask it is because it won't go away. And tyranny, that's another unpleasant word, another inescapable aspect of life this week.

We live in a broken world. We've got hearts that gravitate towards bad choices. And we've got, we've got bodies. All of you in here, and many of you maybe very, very, very much know this right now, the tyranny of a body that is getting old and that you cannot beat.

And it's all pointing us towards the merciless power of sin and death and how that power has been a brutal oppressor of humanity ever since our first parents fell.

And theologically, this is the plight of humanity. Experientially, this is what you and I experience every single week. That's why life feels like it doesn't make sense. That's why there's always a negative voice in your head accusing you of failure.

[29 : 35] That's why death and illness wrecks people's lives and all too often we feel completely helpless. These are our greatest needs. All of them are met through the anointed one, Jesus Christ.

All of them are met. So Jesus, the prophet, brings truth and light and clarity and knowledge in a world that's full of confusion and lies and deceit.

The priest cleanses all your guilt, all your sin, every mistake, all your scars are healed, all your mistakes are forgiven, all your regrets are forgotten and Jesus, the king, breaks the tyranny and power of death forever.

And he rules at the right hand of God today to defend and protect his people forever so that death can never harm you again if you are trusting in Jesus.

If you are a Christian or if you become one, that power of death cannot get you. All it can do is send you to Jesus where you will be with him forever in paradise.

[30 : 49] We desperately need a prophet to teach us, we need a priest to atone and intercede for us, we need a king to rule and defend us in Jesus. You've got it all. you've got it all forever.

And is that not everything that you crave? We crave truth, we long for forgiveness and we're terrified of dying.

Anointianity is such a cool word because it's reminding you that Jesus deals with it all. Our deepest needs are met. And last of all, all of this is telling us that in Jesus our possibilities are transformed.

So remember, one of the key aspects of this whole concept of being anointed is that Jesus is anointed by the Spirit. Through that anointing, he's able to accomplish all that God has sent him to achieve.

And he did it and now he's exalted at the right hand of God. So Jesus was anointed to do an amazing work, he's done it. Died, rose, again, ascended, he's at the right hand of the Father, he's done an amazing work.

[32 : 02] But the big question is this, has that work stopped? No. That work goes on. And how does that work continue?

It continues through his people. It continues through his church. It continues through you. And that's where we see that there's such a beautiful teaching in the gospel whereby the risen Christ, the risen anointed Christ, what does he do now?

He anoints us with his Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that dwells in him dwells in us. That Holy Spirit is poured out on you.

When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in you, and as you go on as a Christian, Jesus keeps pouring his Spirit into you, why is he doing that? He's doing that to empower you to accomplish his purposes.

Jesus has made you an anointing. He's made you a Christian. By faith, we're united to the anointed Jesus, and when that happens, all our possibilities are transformed because we're no longer slaves to sin.

[33 : 18] We're no longer paralyzed by guilt. We're no longer blind. We're no longer living by ourselves. We are indwelt by the Spirit so that we can be led by the Spirit and bear the fruit of the Spirit and witness for Jesus in the power of the Spirit.

You'll remember that when Jesus died on the cross, the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Now, at one level, that was beautifully symbolic of the fact that the cross means we have access to God, but the tearing of the temple doesn't just allow access, the tearing of the temple curtain also allows outpouring, and the Holy Spirit is poured out on His people so that they can serve Him and that He can accomplish His purposes through Him.

What does that mean? It means that this week is exciting for what God can do through you as His anointed people. So what's the most important encounter of all?

Right now. who's that encounter with? It's with you. If you're a Christian, you've come here this morning to be renewed, refreshed, recharged, and empowered to go and serve Him.

And if you're not yet a Christian, or if you're not sure, the most important moment in your life is right now. because Jesus is saying, I want you to be mine.

[34 : 43] I want to meet every need that you have. I want you to trust me and follow me. I want you to be an anointing as well.

Amen. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank You that You are the perfect prophet, the perfect priest, the perfect King.

We love You, and we thank You, and we want to live for You through the power of Your Spirit that You have so graciously poured out on us.

Help us all to see and understand more of just how amazing You are, and of just how much You've done for us. Amen.