

Jesus on His Travels

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 April 2008

Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 0 0] It doesn't matter how often we say it, but the reality and the truth for us, and the great thing about biblical Christianity is that there is, always is, always will be, always has to be one central message, one focus. There's no circumstance, there's no time, there's no audience, which should change that emphasis. The emphasis for us should always be the same. The emphasis is the gospel, is Jesus Christ and the good news, the message of the good news that is spoken about here by Jesus Himself. That remains as a congregation, as a denomination, as individuals. It remains our beating heart. It must remain at the very core of what we are and what we do, because the moment as individuals or as a church we begin to move away from the gospel and Jesus Christ Himself, our hearts get colder and they get harder and weaker.

So there is a direct scientific philosophical, whatever you want to call it, any kind of description. There's a direct parallel between the closeness we are to Jesus Christ in the gospel and the health of our spirituality and our hearts. We will be warm-hearted and we will have a beating heart that is strong spiritually as we remain close to Jesus Christ and the good news, the gospel.

And that's what Luke wants us to understand and to know and to, is what he's teaching in this gospel, in this message that he's bringing. He is building a picture of Jesus. He's building a picture of who Jesus is and why he has come and that is tremendous. And for us as children as well, for the children who are here to remember that, that the gospel, Christianity is always about Jesus.

We never will graduate beyond that. It will always be the deepest, more mature, most intelligent, most wise Christian will never move beyond the centrality of Jesus in their life. So it's all about Jesus then and now. It's all about Jesus and this passage, as we unpack the passage, we will see what Luke is trying to teach us here. He's reminding us that Jesus is the Savior in verses 14 and through to verse 21, we have Jesus going into home territory. It's as if he's been somewhere else and he moves north to Galilee. It's like moving from here up to the Highlands or somewhere. And he goes to his home territory and he goes as his custom into church on a Sunday morning and he goes and takes the Bible and reads from Isaiah chapter 61. And by this time quite a lot of people know about Jesus and he has a bit of a reputation. And as he hands, you know, it would be like me closing the Bible, putting it down and saying, now, having read, there's a silence. There's an anticipation. And he says today, today, that prophecy is fulfilled with me being here.

He immediately, as he is Luke records it for us, as he's directed by the Holy Spirit, we're told he's full of the Holy Spirit here. He claims publicly in church that he is the fulfillment of this Old Testament messianic prophecy. He is the one that is being spoken of. It's a massive claim that he makes. Sometimes maybe it's lost on us a little bit in our 21st century kind of Scottish background. But for Jesus to go into a synagogue and read Isaiah 61 and say, today, this message is about me, it's fulfilled in me, as you hear it today, it would have been known, and it would have been understood by the audience as a declaration by Jesus of his messiahship, that he was the Savior, that he was Lord. He is the Savior. That is what Jesus from a very early stage is making clear. And you know now, 2000 years later, he remains the Savior. We have 2000 years of an unchanged message that has affected and transformed and changed millions of people's lives. Christ remains, he is the Good News, so that when we come to worship and we open the word, then again, again and again, we hear Jesus saying, today, it still remains relevant. It is still at the core of our lives. His word is still vibrant and alive, and his claims remain unchanged. He for us today remains the answer, remains the Good News, and remains the Savior. And that never changes, we can't move from that. Now there may be, everyone's hearts today are the same as they were 2000 years ago, and everyone's needs spiritually the same. I think it expresses itself differently sometimes today, and maybe there's a kind of apologetic sophistication about people today, so that it's not as easy to break into people's hearts and break into their sense of a need for God.

[6 : 15] But here we can't move away from Jesus being the answer to people's needs, to their lostness, and to their spiritual poverty, so that we see today a tremendous cult of self-obsession, self-centredness, self-aggrandizement, self-actualization.

We see tremendous loneliness. We see questioning among people, questioning a vague and kind of borderless spirituality, where people are looking for something, mention a bit more about that in a minute, and a vulnerability, despite the kind of sophistication and the wealth and the poverty and the cushion that all of that gives to us, there remains that vulnerability. And in the midst of all the absurdity of death, still breaks into every living relationship and every family and every home and every unit, so that Jesus remains the one who provides the answer to these absurdities and these troubles and these sins and these ugliness, and that ugliness that we see. He remains the Savior.

He remains the Savior that I offer from God's Word with the authority of God behind that offer to you today, because He remains the good news that He is the Savior. He came to live, to die, to be raised again, to be ascended into glory, so that He can be our Savior, to take the place of us.

I offer Him to you today as the Savior. That doesn't change. Time does never change that reality. He is the Savior. Now, He is also the teacher. Apologize for typing mistake on my part.

From the notes, it's not leader there, it's teacher. Can we read more in writing? Do it in a hurry. He is the teacher, okay? From this passage we learn, He is a leader of course as well, but in this passage we learn, He is a teacher. Now, if you read that chapter and if you were to summarize it very quickly, I wonder how you would summarize it. Probably you would say, this is Jesus, the worker of miracles. There's a lot of miracles, a lot of healings, and there's a lot of miracles that happen in this passage. So we talk about the actions of Jesus, the work, the power of Jesus as we see it in this chapter, and you know, you're right, that's very much part of the chapter. But also, there's five times in this small section of the chapter, verbs relating to Jesus being a teacher are used. He's a teacher, He's a preacher, He's a teacher, He taught them, He taught. And so the reality is, among all the powerful works that He did, they were kind of just backing up His message, His teaching, and we're told that His teaching was amazing, that it was graceful, that it was authoritative, that it was fresh, that it was convicting, and it was undoubtedly, it was unswervingly challenging. You know, we can see that. I love the way the

[9 : 44] Bible always, especially in speaking about Jesus, talks not only about what Jesus is to say, but gives the reaction of people. And it's such fertile ground for challenging ourselves about our reactions to Jesus. But you can see that Jesus never left anyone untouched by His teaching, by what He said, by His message. He's a teacher. Primarily He comes, yes, as the Savior, of course, and He's a Savior through the teaching of Him, of His Himself, of the truth, of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, of the revelation of God. He teaches us about God. That also now doesn't change. It's why we emphasize the word. It's why we emphasize the Bible. It's why the pulpit is in the middle of the church, not just stuck in a corner, because it's central to what we are. The word of God is important.

It's even elevated, but I don't like it up there, because I can't see you so much, too far away from you. But it's central to what we are, and it's central to our lives, and that we revolve our lives around being disciples, followers of Jesus, learning at Jesus' feet, knowing what Jesus wants for us. And we have that great ongoing need as Christians to be taught by Jesus. He's looking for us to be students of grace, graceful students of Himself, to hear His voice, so that, you know, these acts of worship that we come together and we open God's word and we come under God's authority, all of us come under God's authority in His Word. We're looking for it to speak powerfully.

We're looking for it to address our need. We're looking for it to answer our prayers, because we've all come today, haven't we? We've all prayed today. We've all come and asked God, speak to me through your word today, haven't we? We did get up a couple of minutes earlier and ask for that, didn't we? We did look for God to speak to us from His, didn't we? Didn't we look? Are we expect?

Is it real for us? Are we just here to be entertained or not, as the case may be? Do we believe that this is the transformational, fresh, challenging, living Word of God so that He says, today, and you come and say, Lord, I need your guidance today. I'm looking for your Word today. Jesus Christ, I'm looking to be led and taught and guided by you. A teacher He is. Christ-centered Christians will be word-centered Christians, Discipled Christians who are listening to the voice of Jesus Christ, who know the voice, who hear the voice of Jesus as it is through His Word, and we will be a word-centered people, a word-centered church. The Word of God is important to us, because we believe it's the living Word of God, and it applies to us in a living way. Terrible, isn't it, if people come in and they think, this is a very dead church, a very dull church.

Nothing happens, they go in and out and they're unchanged, and it doesn't look like it's very important to them. The worship, the singing, the praise, the fellowship, and it all reflects around our concept of Jesus as teacher, our concept of Jesus as Lord, as Savior, of our need for Him, and the devil will always just whisper in our ears, say, it's only ritual. Just go along. I'm sure that'll gain you some points before God. I'm sure it's helping you somewhere along the line, and He'll say, don't worry about it being significant. Don't worry about fellowship.

[13 : 24] Don't worry about opening the Word in your home. Don't worry about these things. Just go along with the flow. And so we recognize, and Luke wants us to recognize the importance and significance of Jesus as teacher, Savior. He is a teacher. We also see that He is the power, don't we? This does speak a lot about Jesus, not as a weak and effeminate and ineffective kind of religious leader in any way, but one with great power. Primarily we see it in His healings.

I think we also see it, commentators are divided about this, but I would argue that you see it even in the way that He walked away from the crowd who wanted to stone Him. They drove Him to the edge of town, we're told in verse 28 and 29, they were going to throw Him over the edge.

What could they not do it? It was 200 to 1 maybe, and they couldn't do it? Well, I think they could have, but He walked through the crowd and went in His way. Now, it doesn't say, but I think there's an implicit sense of Jesus' power there where He chooses, it's not His time, so it's time to die. And He simply walks through the crowd, at least with some kind of authority, if not with power. But of course we see it more clearly in His healings. Healing over those who were sick, those who were demon-possessed, Peter's mother-in-law, so obviously Peter was married, incidental fact there that sometimes we forget, but that He had power to heal in various different situations. He healed and had authority over evil spirits. They were great signs of His power, of His authority that He was coming to be the Savior, to bring healing, to bring health, to bring wholeness. And it was revealed ultimately with His victory over disease and over death, which we will one day ultimately enjoy in the New Heavens and the New Earth. His resurrection power, it was even beginning to be displayed here in this chapter. Now, I'm going to just say a couple of things. Healing. What about healing today? Well, I think we recognize that primarily Jesus was healing, not just to make people better, not just because He liked taking people out of a miserable situation, but primarily it was as a sign of His power and of His authority, ultimately, over

Satan and the grave and sin and death. And it was backing up His claims, His teaching, a very important time. The authority to backing up of who He claimed to be. And that was true for His audience then, just as it's true for us as we read it today, it backs up what He says. And it may well be that today, when we come to Him in faith and we're our motive for being healed, as in accordance with God's will for us then, He will heal us physically. But I think often there will be a deeper healing that is presupposed in Jesus' work. And He will be looking to strengthen our faith more than necessarily make us well physically. And sometimes our faith will be strengthened by not being healed, because there's much in the New Testament that speaks about faith being strengthened through suffering, associating with the suffering of Jesus. And it is not just a

Santa Claus figure that just gives us our wishfulfillments. And it also will speak off in the hope that while we struggle and cling on to Jesus Christ by faith here, even in our weakness, that one day in glory we will be healed and we will enjoy physical and spiritual wholeness forever. So healing, no problem with it whatsoever. But Jesus and God may have other purposes and deeper healings to perform. What about demon possession? This passage speaks a lot about demon possession. Some people think just the New Testament writers were a bit ignorant medically of these things. And anyone who maybe had a mental disturbing illness was classed as being demon possessed. And it was just medical ignorance that caused it to be the case.

[18:02] And that's an unfair reading of Scripture and fair reading of someone as medically qualified as Dr. Luke. And also a lack of knowledge of the distinctives that were made in the Bible and in the New Testament narratives of different kinds of illness where clearly demon possession was separated out from mental illness and from other physical illnesses. There's no doubt that demon possession is real. And it was real in biblical times and it can be real today. I think it's more common in pagan societies and maybe animistic societies where spirits are worshiped or where the occult is practiced openly. Where people open themselves more obviously to evil spirits and satanic influence in that way. But what I would say, I think we've been spoiled in this country by Christian heritage, is that despite the scientific sophistication and the age in which we live seemingly to be so rational and so intellectual in its understanding,

I think we will find more and more problems with occultism and with spirit possession. Because people amazingly are opening themselves up to that more and more. As the occult is popularized, whether it be on Calton Hill or on the Royal Mile or in the bookshops of our country, and as paganism is openly embraced and worshipped in a sense, there is clearly going to be more spirit possession. It's bizarre isn't it? It's a bizarre irony in the age of science and ration that our country is returning to overt occultic and pagan worship and practice.

And it's bad. It's harmful. It is dangerous. Undoubtedly so. Jesus has the power. Jesus has the power, the healing power and the strength.

There's a couple of cameo truths here that I just want to mention before looking finally at the people. About Christ's own priorities here, I've mentioned a couple of times in this chapter.

In verse 16 we're told he went up to Nazareth where he had been brought up and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue as was his custom. And then at the end of the chapter in verse 42, we're told that daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place and the mark and account of that were told he went there to pray. And we see there again Luke giving us Jesus' priority.

[20 : 52] What was important to Jesus? What was his custom? He went to church and he prayed. Now I know that synagogue worship is slightly different from New Testament church and you know there are dissimilarities and there are discontinuities, but there's also parallels between it.

The God's people going to worship it publicly together and learn from God's word from Scripture. That was his custom. It's what he did. It's what he sought out. It's what he looked for, to be with God's people and to be with God. To be worshiping God with God's people and to be praying privately, personally to God. Great priorities. Nothing new, nothing different, nothing flashed there, but isn't it great that this is what Christ's priorities for us are. Public worship together and solitary prayer with God. Great things that we should seek after and look and value and recognize that if it's good enough for Jesus then it's good enough for us because this is the pattern he's setting out. That we have this custom, this habit of worshiping together, of learning of God, of being in God's company in public worship and also of this private prayer.

Any custom we make, any habit we have needs to be developed. It never happens just by chance, apart from bad ones. Good habits are things that we need to develop. We need to prioritize. We need to make them important. If we choose not to make private consultation with God a priority, it will not happen, will it? We'll find in our day to day lives it will simply not happen. There are too many things coming into our lives too quickly so that it will not happen. If we don't prioritize it, Jesus we know how to get up very early and even then he was harassed by the crowds. He had to get up very early in order to be in company with God and he made it his habit to be in the synagogue as was his custom. We need to make it our habit. We need to work at it in God's kingdom for God's worship.

Why? Because he is everything. He's everything to us. He's everything for us. We need to be in contact with him and with his body. We need to be among his people and we need to be learning of him and we need to be in fellowship with him. So briefly and in conclusion, what about the people here in this chapter? Well as I said there's different reactions isn't there? There's two primarily. I want to speak about briefly. There's amazement and there's anger. In verse 22 we're told that all the people spoke well of him and were amazed at his gracious words again later on in the chapter and there's also anger. So that we have these reactions to Jesus here in this chapter.

Amazement, at his teaching, at his character, at his message, at his gifts, at his power, at his uniqueness. So much so that he was really worth talking about. It was worth talking about Jesus, we're told in verse 37. The news about him spread throughout the surrounding area. They gossiped about Jesus. He was worth talking about. You know in the synagogue did you see the heart that woman was wearing? It was unbelievable. Did you see it? Or that person, they were, what did they say in the way of church? It was so hurtful. It wasn't like that. They talked about Jesus. It was Jesus Christ, it was the focus of their teaching. They were amazed by him. Amazement but also anger and that is also, interestingly it seems to be from the same kind of people. They were angry so much so that they wanted to kill him. Angry because they thought they knew him. Isn't it? Isn't it Jesus, Joseph's son? We know him. I used to play football with him growing up. How is he so special?

[25 : 06] Isn't it the carpenter's son? They thought they knew him. They thought they knew all about him. And so they thought. It's strange when he claimed to be the Messiah. And even more so when he challenged the type of Messiah he was going to be. He was going to be the Messiah to the Gentiles as he speaks about the judgment of God and the Israelites for their unbelief and how God did miracles among the Syrians and among the widow of Zaraphath, neither of whom were Jews, they were Gentiles and they really hated that because they wanted a Jewish Messiah. They wanted a Jewish Messiah who would save them and who would save them from Roman occupation and everything else that went with it. So he thought he was mad, not their kind of Savior. And isn't it? I don't think that's so very different from today. People can be amazed with Jesus at a surface level to a degree and may be interested in some of the things he says. But there's also a great danger of keeping him at that distance and anger or amazement quickly turning to anger when it gets personal.

When Jesus' words challenge us in our own hearts, you know, because we're cynical and he's fine in theory. He's fine from a distance. He's fine behind a glass case. But we don't want his authoritative statements, his exclusivity and the personal challenge of lordship to us. We don't like that. We're angry with him. We want him dead. We want him buried. We want him closed off.

Please beware of that because it's just rebellion, spiritual rebellion in a different guise, isn't it? Please beware of it. I have to be aware of it in my heart as you have to in yours that we get angry with Jesus' exclusivity and his lordship and we're sinfully selfish and proud and independent. We don't want to hear what he used to say, but rather let us learn positively today as we close from Jesus what he is looking for, not for this anger and this rejection, but he's wanting us to accept the good news, the gospel in our lives. That's what he wants from us. That's what he wants from us as a Christian, to be a good news Christian. That's amazing. A confessional good news Christian with Jesus at the core of what you are and what I am as a believer, that we are Christ turned, we turn to Christ, Christ is the core center and that we have this message of good news for ourselves which should transform our faith and our hearts and our lives and our attitude to work and our dress and everything that we are. So people who are basking in the light of good news, good news, Christians accept that good news. And in so doing you recognise the kind of core of it, maybe the crux of the good news or accepting the good news is recognising

Jesus and his authority. That is really hard to do. It's the hardest thing about being a Christian. It's the hardest thing about becoming a Christian is accepting Jesus' authority and his lordship because we live particularly in an age where everyone does what's right in their own eyes.

Don't tell me about what Jesus is. The great danger is standing here, okay, when Jesus is down there. I say I'll become a Christian when Jesus comes up to me and he answers all my questions and he submits to all my needs then I'll become a Christian. Come on up here Jesus.

[28 : 52] Rather than us being down here, Jesus has been up here and just falling on our knees in adoration for him being God. That is the hardest thing for us to do, to accept his lordship.

I think I mentioned this before, I was at the ambassadors in sport coaching with the boys and with a prayer meeting in the mornings and one of the lads was talking about prayer and one of the leader mentioned something about prayer and she really stuck with me. He said, so often I think when we pray, what we're praying is we're praying for Jesus to come along with us. You know, that's what we pray for Jesus to just be with us in all that we do and that's our attitude to prayer. But as he said, really what it should be is that we should be coming and praying and saying, Lord, will you lead me into what you want rather than come along with me and just kind of rubber stamp everything I'm doing and just be a nice presence with me. So that we're not even asking him.

We're not even asking him about leadership. We're not asking him where he wants us to be. We're not even questioning it. We're just going our own way and say, Jesus, you come with me because I'm a Christian. Rather, he says, we come into prayer and we're looking for God's leadership and say, Lord, I will follow you. I think that's a very significant thing because it speaks about authority, doesn't it? It has the challenge of being led by Jesus rather than seeking to lead Jesus by the nose in our lives and amazement. Looking for that same sense of amazement in his presence with this attitude of being Christ centered people, worship centered and a relationship centered with Christ that we know both in our public worship and in our solitude, amazement at Christ, amazement at His power, at His love, at His grace, at His beauty. I do think we need, I need to, maybe you don't, but I certainly need to and I feel it generally that we need to rekindle that sense of amazement so that as Christians Christ is the subject of our grapevine, but he walked in the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area that we gossip.

Jesus Christ is speaking about the gospel that he is worth speaking about. I wonder in the last time we felt that Jesus was worth speaking about, not only together, but maybe in terms of witnessing the gospel to others. We talk about church and we talk about apologetics and we talk about philosophy and we talk about creation and we talk about all these things. What about Christ?

That we are amazed by Him. That He is worth talking about. That He is worth gossiping. Fear that's lost to many and I'm not particularly sure why other than maybe that that priority isn't there for us, of prioritizing a private soul to be walked with Him as well as the centrality of learning from Him and worship together. So the center of our lives, He is inexhaustible.

[32 : 06] It's not dull, it's not surface, it's not shallow to speak about the gospel because the New Testament speaks about the inexhaustible riches of Christ. And if we think we've moved beyond that, then we've moved beyond the gospel, we've moved beyond Christ and there's only darkness there. So let us return and focus on the light and return increasingly in our lives to Jesus.

We'll bow our heads briefly in prayer. Lord God, we ask and pray that You would help us to learn from You and learn of You and that Your Word would be living and vibrant, that Your character would be authoritative and powerful in our lives, that Your salvation would be real and meaningful and Lord God that we would respond to You with faith and with amazement and with gratitude.

Lord, keep us from sinful rebellion and unbelief, we pray, and help us to find our peace, the peace that passes understanding that the world cannot give and can't take away. May we find that in Jesus Christ today. Amen.