

Communion Thanksgiving Service

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[0 : 00] We have been looking at responses to Christ, how different individuals responded to the Christ who was going to the cross.

Malkus, one who in the hardness of his heart, in spite of seeing the goodness and the care of Christ, still led him to be crucified.

His judges that did not examine the evidence as they should, otherwise they would have seen the truth of his words. His judges who just were interested in some religious activity or some amazing wonder, his judges would not stand by the truth, although they knew what the truth was.

To men who failed and miserably betrayed, in a sense, the Lord Jesus Christ. One who looked back in anger.

The other one who looked forward in hope. But we have to put our eyes a little bit this evening on some responses to the crucifixion very briefly.

[1 : 15] And we see that in the Gospel narratives how some scoffed the Lord Jesus Christ, some heaped, as we read, insults on Him.

Some we are told that simply walked away. They could not be bothered. They really could not think. Maybe they could not think what was all that fuss about that man.

Maybe they left with a measure of guilt. Maybe with a sense of fear. But then some sensed the divine.

This hardened soldier. The one in charge of the execution. Used to driving nails through men's wrists and feet.

Used to hang them on crosses. Maybe as a routine work with which he was involved week after week.

[2 : 23] Something happened in this man's heart. And as he saw how he died. As he saw the things that had happened. He basically came to the conclusion, this man is who he claimed to be.

This man was the Son of God. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Did he claim to be the Son of God? You see, because that is the problem that quite often we are confronted with. Did he ever claim to be God himself?

You see, because nowadays we are confronted with people that will come to us and say, OK, yes, this Jesus stuff is nice. I mean, Jesus, the fact is that it may be God for you, but I don't take him to be God.

You see, I don't think he never said that actually. You see, the problem is that he never said, I am God. Worship me because I am God.

[3 : 34] Obey me and receive my word because I am God. We are told he never said that. Can you really say, is it right to say that this man was who he claimed to be?

Now, you see, the problem with identity is that we either take the words of somebody saying who he is, as they are, or we don't. You see, if I tell you that I am Marcos Florit, the son of Antonio Florit, this is either true or false.

There's no other way around it. It's different with other things. If I were to tell you that I am the best-looking fellow around, it may be that only the very intelligent can appreciate that.

Maybe just my wife. I hope that my wife. But the fact is that statements about, but identity, identity is either a fact or it's not.

And this problem is something we need to confront as we come to the Gospels. Did Jesus ever claim to be God? As you try to witness to those around you, or maybe as you're sitting here wondering about this Jesus Christ.

[4 : 51] I mean, did he ever say, I am God? You see, because if he did say that, then we have to respond to him.

And the only way to respond to him in thanksgiving is to respond to him following him and serving him as best as we can. But if he did say, I am God, and he wasn't, then, well, it's a little bit like if I were to come in here, you've never met me before, or the minister here has never introduced me, and I come up and say, oh, you know, my mother's name is Elizabeth.

She goes quite often to a palace in London. She does business there. I find quite funny to see that her face is on the stamps and on the coins in this country.

And she lives in a nice, quite big palace near London. Not right in London, but she lives in quite a big palace. And actually, she's got plenty of properties all over the UK.

You see, when she dies, I will be, I don't have to go any further. You would know perfectly that I would be telling you that I am the heir of the crown of the United Kingdom.

[6 : 10] Now, you may believe me. You may examine my claims, or you may call the ambulance and ask for help. But the fact is that I may not have said the words, I am the Prince of Wales.

But by the words I have said, I have claimed to be that person. And I think that as we try to witness to others about Christ, this is something that we need to be aware of.

And that we need to be able, as Peter says, to be ready to give an answer of the faith that we have. And for this, I would like to ask you to turn to the Gospel according to John in chapter 5.

For there we find a passage that is crucial in the testimony concerning Jesus. You see, when Jesus spoke the words He spoke in John chapter 5, He put Himself, and actually He put others between a rock and a hard place.

Because after those words, and after that discourse, people had to come to some kind of conclusion as to who they would admit, who they would think this Jesus was.

[7 : 34] Let us read in John chapter 5 from verse 19. Jesus gave them this answer. I tell you the truth. The Son can do nothing by Himself.

He can do only what He sees His Father doing. Because whatever the Father does, the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does.

Yes, to your amazement, He will show Him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom He is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

I tell you the truth. Whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned. He has crossed over from death to life.

[8 : 39] I tell you the truth. A time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself.

And He has given Him authority to judge because He is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out.

Those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. By Myself I can't do nothing. I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please Myself, but Him who sent Me.

Now, these words place Jesus really on a point of no return. After affirming these things, Jesus could not go back.

As it has been written, Now, I would like to ask you to forget you've ever read the New Testament.

[10 : 13] Forget you've ever heard about it. And imagine for a few minutes that all you have is the knowledge of the Old Testament, and that you acknowledge that book, you acknowledge that collections of book, as truly the Word of God come to you.

And I would like you to listen to this affirmations of Jesus Christ in the light of what you know of the Old Testament, or in the light of what we'll see from the Old Testament.

For the first thing that Jesus tells His audience there is, My work is the same as the work of God the Father.

You see, it's not similar. It's not alike. It's an emphatic beginning that He uses in verse 19. I tell you the truth. The Son can do nothing by Himself.

He can do only what He sees the Father doing, and so on. You see, what Jesus is affirming here is that literally His work is being done as the Father's work is done, and vice versa.

[11 : 28] The fact is that in the words of Jesus, there are two complementing ideas. What Jesus is saying is basically that He cannot act independently of the Father.

It's not simply that He doesn't do it. It's not simply that somehow He has taken the decision not to do it, but basically it is that He cannot do it.

And Jesus is actually not speaking about a limitation. Jesus is speaking about who He is. It is true that, of course, the Gospels present a certain subordination of the Son to the Father, but a subordination in a state of equality.

What Jesus is saying here is, I cannot just because it's not in my nature. You see, it's like if I were to tell you, I cannot lose weight.

That may point to a limitation. It may be a limitation due to health, due to my will, or it may be my wife's fault. The way she cooks.

[12 : 37] But it is a limitation. But if I were to tell you, I cannot fly, I'm not really speaking about a limitation here. You see, because I was never meant to fly.

I was not created to fly. It's the sort of thing that Jesus is affirming here. You see, I cannot do but what the Father does. It is in my nature.

You see, ontologically, I have to do the things the Father does. It is inherently impossible for me to do otherwise.

And there is a reason. Now, you've never read your New Testament. All you have is your Old Testament. And you're listening now to the words of this man, this teacher from Nazareth speaking. And he tells you that the reason that he cannot do this is that there is an uninterrupted beholding of the Father by the Son. You see, there is a constant communion so that what he actually sees now the Father doing, he does.

[13 : 49] He can only do what he sees the Father doing. Now, you may say, wait a minute. Is that so? Well, you may debate whether it's good grammar or not or whether it's actually impossible in time, but this is what he says.

That he acts because he actually sees the Father acting and he acts in perfect, absolute communion with him. And then he gives the reasons for this.

Even the reasons for this being able to see. And he says that the reason is that the Father loves the Son and the Father shows the Son. And the tenses of the verbs used, they are of a continuous present.

There is a constant love of the Father to the Son. And there is a constant showing of the Father to the Son. So, what Jesus is telling his audience, you who have not read your New Testament up to here, what Jesus is telling his audience is, look, there is no independent action on my side.

There is identical action with the Father. However, this action is based on what I actually see the Father do. And I see because the Father shows me constantly.

[15 : 10] In the case of Jesus, he is not like one of the Old Testament prophets needing the Spirit to reveal to him. But he sees there is this constant awareness in himself of the Father's will.

No wonder that William Barclay wrote in connection with this passage, the acts of God are in a real, true sense, the acts of Jesus of Nazareth.

The things that God does are the things that Jesus does. And the things that Jesus does are the things that God does. Because the great salient truth about Jesus is that in Jesus we see God.

You see, that is what he claimed. And you who know what your Old Testament says are beginning to feel a bit uneasy.

Who is this man? But then he goes on to say that he is actually the one who gives life. Look at verse 21. Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

[16 : 26] And then in verse 24, I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned. He has crossed over from death to life.

There's a combination of things to what Jesus is referring here in connection with life. He is obviously referring to physical life because later on he refers to the resurrection and how a time will come when all who are in their graves, verse 28, will hear his voice, the voice of the one who is speaking to you today, and they will come out of their graves.

You see, he is speaking about the fact that he is the one who gives resurrection. He is the one in whose hands the resurrection of the dead is.

Now, he proved it. He proved it. When he raised some during his ministry, especially as he raised Lazarus.

Remember something that the gospel writer tells us, that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus, but they wanted to kill Lazarus too. He was too much of a threat, that Lazarus.

[17 : 40] We can't allow this fellow to go around walking after having been in the grave several days. too much of an evidence as to who Jesus is.

But he also speaks about being able to give life spiritually. You see, it is about life eternal. And this life, which is life that goes on, is received from the Son.

And this Jesus is speaking to those Jewish leaders, the leaders of the nation, and they know very well. For they know their Old Testament.

And they know what the Old Testament says, Deuteronomy 32, verse 39, Don't you understand? I am the only God. There are no others. I am one.

I am the one who takes life and gives it again. I am the Lord. There is no other. Remember the King of Israel that was confronted with that man who was so ill and that wanted to be healed, and he was afraid for his life.

[18 : 48] And he spoke, saying, When the King of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes in fear and shouted, That Syrian king believes I can cure this man of leprosy.

Does he think I am God with power over life and death? Does he think I am God? And so the people listening to Jesus at the time were probably thinking in their minds, Does he think he is God?

And of course the answer is, Well, yes. Of course. For he doesn't stop there. He goes on to claim that he has sovereign and therefore divine authority.

Look at the end of verse 21. The Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. See, it's not that somehow he gets some kind of authorization from heaven.

But that authority is in himself. It is his initiative. Even for those that were hearing him that day, in a sense he was telling them, You have to ask me.

[20 : 05] Because it is my prerogative. What Jesus is telling them there on that occasion is in different words, but words that amount to the same.

What Jesus is telling them is, I decide eternity. Now this is not something we're trying to imagine here. This is something the people who were hearing Jesus could understand so well in the context of what the Old Testament so clearly established.

Only God is the giver of life in whatever aspect of life. But then, Jesus goes beyond that.

And he tells them, I am to be the judge of all mankind. Verse 22. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.

And by now, you, in your understanding of the Old Testament, are becoming very, very uneasy.

[21 : 22] You take your pocket Old Testament and you look at a few places. And then, you read in the Old Testament, not only that God is our judge, but you, you read that word, you don't even dare to pronounce Yahweh, the name by which God reveals himself to Moses from the burning bush.

I am who I am. And you read that name, or actually, I should say, you just look at it because you, you fear pronouncing the words, and you read that in Isaiah 33, 22, Yahweh is our judge and our ruler.

Yahweh is our king and will keep us safe. And then, you go to Psalm 75 and verse 6, and you read that Yahweh, Jehovah, sometimes it is shown in our scriptures, in our Bibles, that Yahweh and our God, victory doesn't come from the east or the west or from the desert, it is from Him.

And you are the one who judges. You are. No one else. You are. You who is the eternal.

I am. You are the judge of mankind. You see, for all practical purposes, Jesus is telling the audience there that He is the one of whom Daniel spoke in His vision.

[23 : 01] He is the one of whom Daniel spoke, saying, And as I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was white as snow, the hair of his head was white like wool, his throne was flaming with fire, and its fields were all ablaze.

A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him. Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

In my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was one like the Son of Man. And this he says, verse 27, And he has given him authority to judge.

Why? Why? Because he is that one of whom Daniel spoke. He is the Son of Man.

I am the judge of mankind. But then, if that were not enough to determine that something had to be done with that Jesus, he goes on to say, and actually, I deserve the same worship as the Father does.

[24 : 21] I claim for me adoration just as the Father. Look at verse 23, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

at this point, you are beginning not only to be uneasy, but quite enraged. Who is this man?

Who does he think he is? Has he not read, ascribed to the Lord the glory due to his name? Has he never read, I am the Lord your God, I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God?

As he never read, hear Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, how can he dare to say that all may honor the Son that is me, Jesus of Nazareth, as much or in the same way as they are honoring the Father?

You see, for all practical purposes, Jesus is telling his audience that day, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

[25 : 40] Now, I am not making this out, I am not imagining that this is what they understood. Look at chapter 10 verse 33, another occasion when Jesus spoke in similar ways.

They told Jesus, we are not stoning you for any of this, we are not stoning you for the things you have done. That's not the reason. We are stoning you for blasphemy because you, a mere man, claim to be God.

You see, nobody can tell us, no, no, Jesus never claimed to be God. Of course he did. Of course he did. He claimed unity of work with the Father.

He claimed to be the giver of life. He claimed to have sovereign authority. He claimed to be the judge of mankind. He claimed to deserve worship as the Father does.

This is not something that the church came up with this idea many, many, many years after the crucifixion. You see, from the very beginning, the church of Jesus Christ referred to him as the Lord.

[27 : 02] the very same words by which the word Yahweh or Jehovah, as it is in some Bibles, it is found in the Old Testament, in the Greek version.

For that was the version that many used. And every time there in the Septuagint, in the Greek version of the Old Testament, when that name, that sacred name of God is found, what you find is that Kyrios, the Lord.

And the church began to refer to Jesus Christ as Lord, as Jehovah, from the very first moment. This is what his enemies understood.

They understood he claimed to be God. This is what his disciples understood. they understood that he claimed to be God, and that he showed that he was.

Thomas said to him, my Lord and my God. Jesus never corrected his enemies. When his enemies were about to stone him because in their eyes he was a blasphemer, he never said, oh, oh, oh, oh, stop, stop for a moment here.

[28 : 31] You've misunderstood me. He never corrected his friends, he never corrected his followers when they worshipped him. He never said, as other men said, as we read in the New Testament, why do you worship me?

I am a man just like you are. You see, Jesus claimed to be God, and the resurrection evidenced it. What are we going to do? What do you do with a man that claims that claim? What do you do with one and you see, that is the problem that we need to help people to see?

That they cannot just like Jesus. For many like, he's a likable lad. No, you cannot just like Jesus.

He has never left that option open. You cannot just like him. You have to worship him, or you have to kill him. And in that sense, those very famous words of C.S.

[29 : 51] Lewis in Mere Christianity are so, so precise. I quote him, I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him.

I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. This is the one thing we must not say, goes on Lewis to write, a man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher.

He would either be a lunatic, on a bend with the man who says he's a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice.

Either this man was and is the son of God, God, or else a madman, or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call

him Lord and God.

But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about him being a great human teacher. he has not left that open to us.

[31 : 17] He did not intend to. The option for us tonight is the same. What are we going to do with Jesus? See, it's a problem.

For we have to declare him worthy of crucifixion and damnation. or we have to fall at his feet and say, my Lord, save me, here am I.

I want my life to be yours. Now, think it because these are the only two honest options with which we are left.

There is no in between. Jesus never meant for a neutral reaction to him to be possible. you either fall at his feet or you spit at him.

You kill him as one deserving death. And the question that you need to answer tonight and that everyone that comes in contact with you needs to answer is, what will be my choice?

[32 : 35] who will I say Jesus is? What will I say Jesus deserves? Adoration or execution?

There's no in between. Let us conclude singing some more words of Psalm 22. Psalm 22. Psalm 22. Psalm 22. Psalm 22. Psalm 22. Psalm 22.

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