

One mediator

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[0:00] Well, I think it's just about 6.30, so this is 1 down to 6. 1 Timothy 2 verses 1 to 6.

Hear the word of God.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

This is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. And this is our text that I want us to focus on tonight. For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

[1:15] Amen. And that's the word of God. Well, Christmas is very much in the rearview mirror for us now, isn't it?

It feels a bit like a distant memory. I wasn't around at Christmas, I was away, but one of the things I did do in my time away, because I wasn't at church while I was away, but I did want to think and meditate upon and really consider what Christmas is all about.

So I spent some time just reflecting on and reading about the incarnation. And one of the things that just kept kind of coming up in my reading, in my thoughts, was this word mediator.

Mediator. Just repeatedly came up on the things I was reading and so forth. So I thought it would be helpful as we come to communion this evening, do something a little bit different.

This is possibly, well, this is going to be a little bit more topical rather than exegetical. Thinking about Christ as our mediator. Three thoughts, not necessarily equally divided up.

[2:29] Christ as our one and only mediator. Christ as our human and divine mediator. And Christ as our new covenant mediator.

So the first thought is Christ as our only mediator. Just going back to 1 Timothy 2.5, which we've just read. The focus in this text will be, For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men.

The man, Christ Jesus. Christ as our new covenant mediator. Well, many of us will understand the whole concept or the idea of a mediator. We see this often in everyday life, don't we?

You can see it in something as mundane and as sporting events, for example. You have an umpire. You have two competing people. And the umpire is taking that position, if you like, of a mediator.

Something far more serious and deeply sad that we see. We've seen it quite a lot in the news recently. The whole matter of war. Particularly Ukraine.

[3:34] You've heard of emissaries from other countries. Trying to broker peace. Trying to mediate. Trying to be a mediator between Ukraine and Russia to bring about peace.

So we see this very much in everyday life. Many of you will know I'm a social worker in my full-time job. And sadly, much of what I do as a role is mediating.

Mediating between warring parents. Disputes between families. It's very sad and it's a reality of my job. Particularly around issues of contact with children.

It's difficult work. It's tiring work. And even sadder, this whole matter of mediating in terms of between people and so forth.

We may see this in the whole life of the church. As elders, I myself haven't had to deal with this. And I'm not sure if Daniel has. But I'm sure Phil, in his long ministry, has had situations where he's possibly had to mediate between parties or people within church that disagree.

[4:39] It's a reality of life, sadly, in a fallen world, isn't it? Mediation. And some of you may have your own experiences of that. It's an important part of the gospel because there has been a profound and deep breach in our relationship with God.

It's not just a minor disagreement. It's not just we have different views on something. There's a sense in which there's been such a deep rupture in our relationship with God, which we see in the garden.

That we see in our own lives and we know experientially. And we look around in this broken and sin-cursed world. And all the troubles at root is that breach.

That sin. Where not only are we disagreeable, but we are enemies. We are enemies of God. We see God as an enemy to us without Christ.

But the reality of it is he sees us as enemies to him as well. So we desperately need a mediator. The purpose of Christ's mediatorial office is specifically to save men and women and bring them to God.

[5:58] We read about that in 1 Timothy 1.15. Just briefly. 1 Timothy 1.15. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

Without Christ, we are in desperate need of salvation and we are in desperate need of a mediator. In the Old Testament, in redemptive history, there were other temporary intermediaries.

For many of us, Moses will come to mind quite prominently as a mediator between God and Israel. You think of the Old Testament offices of the prophets.

The prophets acting as a kind of covenant prosecutor, legal mediator. You think of the priests with the whole sacrificial system. You think of the kings.

In some sense, they acted as mediators, but they were all pointing to Christ. And what they couldn't do is mediate salvation the way our Saviour Christ does.

[7:10] No other religion, no other kind of spiritual system or belief or philosophy can bring people to God.

It's very clear in this scripture. There is one who mediates on our behalf of Jesus Christ. No world view. You can think of wokeism.

You can think of liberalism. You can think of conservatism. You can think of New Ageism or whatever ism you want. None of those can mediate between God and us.

We see in branches of Christianity, various sects or various expressions of Christianity. Roman Catholicism, for example, makes much of Mary.

She's seen as a mediatrix. But that won't do. The Pope, the vicar of Christ, seen as an intermediary between us and God.

[8:06] No. No sacramental system, no priestly caste or system can mediate between us and God. It is only Christ. And we see this clearly in the text.

And that's such good news. And this is something we proclaim here at Calvary. No amount of works, no amount of our own effort or our own achievements can act as a mediator.

Only Christ can be our mediator. We cannot look to ourselves. We live in a culture, in a society, in a time where much is made of self, isn't it? The sovereign self.

Now it is only Christ who is our mediator. He is the only source of peace and wholeness and fullness and joy. And that is wonderful news. Jesus makes this very clear in John.

In a series of statements that you'll all be familiar with, Jesus says, I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved. I am the way and the truth and the life.

[9:11] No one comes to the Father except through me. This is very clear, isn't it? I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him.

He is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing. Surely, if this wasn't truly an incredibly astounding, profoundly exalted person, this would be someone who would be an utter egomaniac, wouldn't it?

The apostolic testimony is that there is salvation in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven and given among men by which we must be saved.

One mediator. One only mediator. But we have a mediator who is both human and divine. And this is something I have to say as I was reading about this at Christmas.

I couldn't understand it. It utterly blew my mind. There's much mystery here. And I'm going to try and fumble through some of the thoughts that I gleaned. But it's a wonderful truth that Christ is one person and two natures.

[10:31] He is truly human. We thought about this recently with Daniel helping us in the evenings with the series on the emotional life of Christ. As a human, he had emotions like us.

He was in his humanity, what theologians call was impassable, was passable. He suffered. He felt he could be acted upon as a human.

He needed to sleep. He needed to eat. There was limitation. There was finitude in his humanity. But Christ is also God, truly God.

Impassable, not capable of suffering. Unchangeable, immutable, sovereign. Eternal. Can't understand that, but it's a truth that the Bible sets forth.

And we see here in this passage, Paul emphasizes the humanity of Christ. The man Christ. This has led to some theologians arguing that Christ is mediator only in his human nature.

[11:37] But I think there's good reason for us to speak of Christ as mediator according to his whole person as both human and divine.

Human nature alone is insufficient to mediate salvation. As the mediator must both accomplish and apply redemption.

The promises of the covenant and things such as atoning for sin. Things like writing the law on our hearts. Things like renovating and changing our personalities and characters and sanctifying us. This can only be the work of a divine being. Saving a multitude of people from every tribe and tongue. Someone who's merely human cannot do that.

It has to be someone who is both human and divine. We see in the scriptures the divine nature of Christ is in the scriptures in many places. It's more shadowy and mysterious in the Old Testament.

[12:47] But certainly it is there. But in the new we can go to places like John 1. You'll be familiar with places like John 1. Hebrews 1. Acts 20. 17. Colossians is a place where we see this.

The beauty and the wonder of the divinity of Christ. And I want us just to turn there just for a few moments. Colossians 1.

Let's just turn to 1.15. He is the image of the invisible God. The firstborn of all creation.

Firstborn. It will be easy to read that and think about him being created. That means the preeminent. That speaks of his preeminence. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth.

Visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through him and for him. This is not merely speaking of human nature.

[13:52] This is clearly speaking of divinity. Also Colossians 2.9 says, For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

We also see in Titus 2.11-15. Titus 2.11-15.

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For the grace of God has appeared. Bringing salvation for all people. Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. And to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

Waiting for our blessed hope. The appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour. Jesus Christ. You notice in Timothy. It's speaking about Christ the man.

[14:55] Here it's talking about Christ as our great God and saviour. So this human nature and divine nature is absolutely essential in terms of our salvation.

In terms of our mediator. Because he had to be human to feel sympathy towards us.

He had to be human because it was humans who broke God's law. He had to be human to fulfill and meet all the demands and the requirements of God's law.

He had to be human to fulfill and meet that obedience that was required by that broken covenant of works. But he also had to be divine.

Has to be divine so he can bear that wrath of God that's poured out on him. He can bear that burden.

[15:57] That he can obtain and restore to us righteousness and life. It's a great mystery. But a wonderful mystery as we come to the supper. And as we meditate upon that.

It should be blowing our minds. Now there are many false views. I didn't realise until quite recently as to how many there are.

But there are so many false views about this whole matter of the divinity of Christ and the humanity of Christ. And some of them maybe don't seem so relevant in this day and age. But certainly in history they bear so much.

They seem to have been repeated in many ways. And there were things like the Ebionites. Like a Jewish sect of Judaizers. Who believed very much in circumcision.

They believed very much in kind of mosaic law. But they didn't believe in the Pauline epistles. And they believed Christ was an exalted, righteous, great prophet, a teacher.

[16:59] But he wasn't divine. And you might think, well, that's not relevant. We don't have Ebionites today. But this is still very much alive and well if you think of Islam. Would think very similarly.

You think of kind of liberalism in many ways. Liberalism. And Christ was a great man, you might hear people saying. But he wasn't God. You have the kind of Gnosticism that kind of came about after the time of the apostles.

Possibly during the time of the apostles that John is speaking to in John. When he's talking about the denying of the humanity of Christ. That saw Christ merely as almost like a phantom.

Almost just spiritually. He wasn't really physical. Wasn't truly human. Didn't walk the earth. He was just almost like a hallucination. A kind of phantom.

You have the well-known heresy, Arianism. Arius, who saw Christ as the powerful son of God.

[18:07] But he was created in time by the Father. So he was exalted. He was powerful. He was the son of God. Yet he was an exalted human being only. And you think, well, we don't have Arians today.

But the spirit of Arianism is alive and well every time a Jehovah's Witness is knocking on your door. In essence, this is what they believe. There are other false views that are maybe where ancient teachers were grappling with the whole idea of the humanity and divinity of Christ and how they interacted.

Nestorianism. Nestorianism that saw Christ, rather than seeing him as one person and two divine natures, would see him as two persons, almost splitting Christ.

So you have the human person and the divine person. You have, in opposition to that, and almost there's a total reaction to that, something called monophysitism, which means one nature, where Christ's humanity and divinity is mingled.

Do you imagine a glass of water if you dropped ink into it? It changes it into another substance. And adoptionism, where Christ was adopted as a human at the time of his baptism and then resurrected and exalted as the Son of God at the time he was resurrected.

[19:25] All these false teachings and beliefs about who Christ is. And there are so many more that are probably out there that I know nothing of. But we confess that Christ is one person, two natures.

The Westminster Confession takes, and I think it communicates in a very clear way, what the ancient creed said, where it says that the two whole, perfect and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition or confusion, which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

What a mediator we have. How can this be applied in our lives? How does this look for us?

Well, we see this in the text, that Christ, as our mediator, he ransoms and redeems his people. You see, in 1 Timothy it says, For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

This idea of ransom, we see it in other places where the idea of mediator is mentioned in the scriptures, namely Hebrews, which I'm going to come to in a moment, speaks of redemption and

redeeming.

[21:02] The idea of ransoming and redeeming, the idea that a death has occurred and that we are redeemed from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

It's the idea of purchasing someone's release, rescuing people from loss, slavery or death by the payment of a ransom price.

Do you see yourself as someone who's been ransomed? Do you see yourself as someone who's been redeemed? These are rich words, they're gospel words. They're the heart of the gospel.

In Mark 10.45, Mark says, For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. A ransom, it's the release of a criminal from the death he deserved by satisfying the offending party for his loss.

We like to think very highly of ourselves, don't we? Outside of Christ, we're like criminals, but need ransoming.

[22:17] And we see the payment price which our mediator pays in full. Christ's obedience unto death was the price of our redemption. He has secured our release.

And as Peter says, Not by silver, not by gold, but by his precious blood we've been ransomed. This ransom price wasn't paid to the devil. I think it's important to say there are some in church history that felt that the ransom price was paid to the devil.

No, this ransom price was paid to God. God the Son paid the ransom price to God the Father. It's astounding, isn't it? It's astounding.

And as those who have been redeemed and ransomed, we can receive and we can enjoy the promised eternal inheritance. And we can enjoy the blessings of the new covenant, which I think is alluded to here in this Timothy text.

Maybe I'm pushing it a little bit too far, but where it says, There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

[23:33] At the proper time. We think about that proper time in redemptive history. The new covenant came into fruition at Christ's coming.

In Galatians 4, 4-5, Paul says, But in the fullness of time, when the fullness of time had come, pardon me, God sent forth his Son. And this leads us to just my final thought, is in Hebrews. Hebrews 9, 15. Where the writer of Hebrews says, we don't know who the writer of Hebrews is. Speaking of Christ, he says in 9, 15, Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

So Christ is our new covenant mediator. Helpful just to think a little bit for a moment. What do we mean by covenant? It's a word we use quite a lot.

[24:47] We talk about various different covenant administrations, the covenant of grace, covenant of works. Covenant is a solemn promise. It's a binding relationship between parties.

It's a solemn promise from God to us. It's a binding relationship between us and God, which involves blessings. There are both blessings in the covenant, but there are also obligations. And all saving grace throughout redemptive history, including the old covenant administration, came through Jesus Christ and by his blood.

Of course, in the old covenant, they were looking forward. You had promise in the old covenant. Obviously, in the new covenant, we have fulfillment. You think of the old covenant administration and the promises, even going as far back as the garden.

Genesis 3.15, the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. That's the first gospel promise. And then that unfolds. And you have the first time the word covenant is actually used in Noah, the Noahic covenant.

[25:56] And then that's a vast common grace covenant where the seed is preserved. Then it hones in to the Abrahamic covenant.

Mark helpfully talked about that this morning. And we have the covenant of grace is in more sharp focus there where we have this promise of a multitude as great as the stars.

And then we have the Mosaic covenant where we have the people of God that are set aside as the kind of theocracy and constituted a nation.

And Moses receives the law. And so there was always grace. There was also that thread of grace. Then again, the focus narrows in to the Davidic covenant where you have the messianic king pointing to Christ.

And then of course in Jeremiah 31 we see the promise of the new covenant. It's brand new. But that doesn't mean that there's no sense that it has anything to do with what happened in the past.

[26:55] It's just a totally refreshed, totally repaired, totally updated covenant that has some connection to the past. But it's new in that you have this kind of explosive...

You have the son of God appearing on the scene who is both human and divine and the mediator of the new covenant. And that is the time that we are in now.

Hebrews 8, 6 says Christ has obtained a ministry that is much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better since it is enacted on better promise.

We have to be careful here. It's not that the old covenant was bad. I think there are some branches of Christianity that see the old covenant as purely bad or wrong or God got it wrong.

It was for its time. It was the church in infancy. Trying to think of a good example. You all know here I have children.

[27:58] If I came to church on a Sunday morning and one of my children's year six transitioning into secondary age, if I kind of stumbled into church wheeling him in in a buggy, you'd be like, what on earth are you doing?

You'd be thinking, Jerome, that's just crazy. You know, that's totally developmentally inappropriate. You know, he's going to be at secondary school. Now, the buggy itself isn't bad. The buggy had its time and its purpose when he was younger in infancy.

And that's what we get really with this whole idea of the covenant, the old covenant. The old covenant was, and we read about this in Galatians, it was a bit like having stabilizers or a buggy for the people of God or it was like the ABCs where they needed those visual aids all pointing to Christ. But now we've come into the fullness of time. Now we are the church that is grown out of infancy and we are in maturation now. We don't need those old covenant types of shadows.

We have our mediator of the new covenant. And as we gather for the Lord's Supper, this is a new covenant meal. Now, we don't have all of those, all of that kind of regalia or so forth.

[29:17] And Mark touched on this this morning. I think it does warrant just repeating to some degree. That's why we as a church and certainly we as an elders, we don't say we think it would be a good idea, for example, for us to, let's have Passover meals as a church in remembrance or let's take our eight-day-old children and circumcise them or let's remember certain feast days.

I say that because I don't want to be disrespectful to our messianic Jewish friends or our Jewish friends and so forth, but we do that for a theological reason because we are people of the new covenant.

Christ has come, our mediator. We don't need to do those things. So we come to this new covenant meal and let's, as we partake in the supper this evening, let's just wonder in the magnificence and the beauty and the awesomeness that we have a saviour who is both fully human, can sympathise with us, who knew what it was like to feel pain, to feel loss, to feel rejection, to know sorrow, sinlessly, to feel weakness, to get tired, but he was perfect in his humanity, the true humanity, but a saviour who also is God, eternal, infinite, unchangeable in his being, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

What a wonder and what a thing for us to meditate upon. So, we'll, just in response to that, sing and then we'll partake in the Lord's Supper.