

Christ The King

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[0 : 00] A.W. Tozer once said, What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.

The way you think about God, the image that you have in your mind, will shape the way you make decisions, determine your values, will impact your interactions with others and the choices that you make.

What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you. I'm reminded of a story of a mum who had twin boys.

They were five, six years old. She was cooking some pancakes and they were arguing quite fiercely who was going to have the first one.

So she came up with an idea and she said, What do you think Jesus would do in this situation? She said, I reckon that Jesus, if he were right here right now, would say, You can go first.

[1 : 25] You can have the first pancake. I can wait. Suddenly all went quiet between these two boys. Until one eventually piped up.

Ryan, you can be Jesus. We have this idea in our minds that being a king is all about, you know, you wield the power.

You're in charge. You know, that game, king for the day. What would you do with all that power? If that's the first thing that comes into our head when we think of God as king, well, through the lens of Jesus, we need to rethink that image.

And over these next few minutes, there's so, so much we could pull out of this conversation. But as we think of Jesus before Pilate, or is it Pilate before Jesus?

And we think of the exchanges that go between them. And by the way, it's fascinatingly ironic, isn't it? How it's a religious leader who, because of his religiosity, refuses to go into a Gentile home because it's the Passover.

[2 : 46] Because if he does so, he wouldn't have time to undergo all the processes of purification that religion would tell him he would have to do. But Jesus is sent into that place.

The very one who actually would save us all. Who goes right into the palace of Pilate and is on trial. And as this conversation takes place, as it plays out, as I say, there are so many things that we could draw attention to.

But I want to focus on just one, just one thing that Jesus says to Pilate, which I would suggest to you perhaps offers us one of the most profound things about the kingship of Jesus.

And it's when Pilate says to Jesus, are you the king of the Jews? And Jesus asked, is that your own idea?

Or did others talk to you about me? Is that your idea?

[4 : 03] It homes in on the personal. This is close up and personal. You see, when we think of a king, we probably think of somebody who has power over vast numbers of people.

Jesus has power over everything. But in this conversation, he brings it right up and personal.

Close up and personal. Is that your own idea? I want you to try and think yourself into Pilate's position there and imagine that Jesus says that in response to you.

Is this your idea? What do you think? What have you got to say? It's just you and me.

I don't know about you, but in my own experience, I find that when the power of the gospel message really lands, when I've found things about it that have really kind of pushed me forward in my faith and made me do things I never thought actually of a dream possible, it's been when that penny has dropped.

[5 : 26] But God actually just might be interested in me. Me? Me? Now, I'm reluctant to cite my own experience as an example because there's the danger that it could detract away from what I really want to be the emphasis this morning because it's about you, not me.

You and me because it's every single one of us. Is that your own idea, Jesus asked, or did others talk to you about me?

The fact is is that those few words reveal something so vital about how the kingship of Jesus needs to be properly understood. That he is not a detached king that is only known by the masses, but he's the king that wants you to know him and you to know that you are known by him.

And when we look at these words that Jesus says to Pilate, it opens up something that we see of a pattern in the many conversations that we see happen in the Gospels between Jesus and individuals.

When suddenly it gets very close up and personal, time and time and time again we find this. Think of when Jesus is at Caesarea Philippi with his disciples and they're talking, there's rumours going around about who is Jesus.

[7 : 07] And Jesus says, well, who are people saying that I am? And the disciples say, well, some say you're a prophet, some say that you're John the Baptist, some say you're Elijah, come back.

But Jesus then homes right up again. Yeah, but what about you? Who do you say? I am. When I think of the story of when Jesus heals a blind man and asks a question that seems almost insultingly obvious to ask, but Jesus says to him before he heals him, what do you want me to do for you?

or when there are 5,000 people gathered and they're hungry and the disciples are exhausted and Jesus turns to his disciples with 5,000 others there and says, you give them something to eat.

I can't help feeling this is something of a recurring pattern in the stories of Jesus that Jesus speaks to somebody and they're kind of thinking you're serious, you're talking to me.

I think of the woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years and there's loads of people crowding around Jesus and everyone's trying to get up close to him, everyone wants a piece of the action, she feels that she's not worthy to approach him so she approaches him from behind with this sense in her head, if only I can just touch the hem of his garment I shall be healed.

[8 : 56] She does precisely that. Then immediately Jesus turns around and says who touched me? And then looks her in the eye and says go, your faith has made you well.

This theme repeats itself over and over and over and over and over. Jesus is the king who is interested in you.

God is the king. But of course when we think of a king we can't help but think of large numbers of people because that's what a king is, they're appointed over large numbers.

So what about then the theme of large numbers? And let's be honest, it does occur in the Gospels. And here's a really fascinating thing which often gets overlooked and we need to understand properly that even when in the Gospels large numbers of people are mentioned there's something very specific about the way in which they are mentioned.

It was back in the 1970s that a Korean professor of theology called An Byung Moo, he lived from 1922 to 1996, An Byung Moo noticed a pattern in the Gospels and out of it he developed something that came to be known as Minyung theology.

[10 : 35] Minyung in Korean means people. But it's all to do with the reoccurrence of a particular word that happens in the Gospels. And the Greek New Testament word is oklos which is translated into people or crowd.

But the pattern that we noticed was that this term which is recurring oklos meaning the people occurs in such a way that it would seem that these people are not just some anonymous herd of people.

They're not just the backdrop. They're the very focus of Jesus' ministry. Mark chapter 7 chapter 8 and chapter 5 we're told Jesus teaches the oklos the people.

Mark chapter 6 Jesus has mercy on the oklos the people. Chapters 1 and 6 Jesus heals the sick among the oklos the people.

Chapter 8 Jesus feeds the oklos the people. Chapter 3 Jesus preaches to the oklos from the boat the people.

[11 : 50] We're told in chapter 4 that Jesus proclaims to the oklos the people the kingdom of God in parables and then in Matthew chapter 5 the Sermon on the Mount is addressed to, there's that word again oklos to the people.

Jesus in chapter 8 calls people together with his disciples and then we're told when Jesus sits and describes the oklos the people he describes them as his true family and say that they are his mother and his brothers and his sisters.

In other words that word because it occurs and reoccurs and reoccurs the people it means that when we come across large numbers in the gospels they're not there just to denote some kind of anonymous nameless backdrop that's subordinate to the more important characters that assume centre stage no the very opposite this is the very focus of Jesus' ministry such that when Jesus does come into conversation with an individual that which is implicit when he is talking to the crowds becomes explicit and that's what's going on here as he comes face to face with Pilate because it's the message that he would say to absolutely every single person throughout history you're included in this you need to know the king who speaks to the individual close up and personal and he's as interested in you as he is anybody else you're not just a number you're not just a category

Jesus loved and died for you as though you were the only person in the world you're not but it's as though you were now we need to understand this properly because don't think for one moment that this is just a load of cosy stuff because the king who comes up close and personal it doesn't always follow that what he's going to have to say to us are going to be the words that we're going to want to hear because elsewhere in this passage where he's speaking with Pilate he says my kingdom is not of this world he says the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth you see when we hear the truth sometimes that can be profoundly challenging and the things that he may want to say to us that are close up and personal may not always be the things that we particularly want him to say to us you see

God loves you so much that he will meet you where you are literally where you are but he loves you so much that he cares enough about you not to leave you where you are and that may involve some tough talking at times and again we see this in the gospels we see it when Zacchaeus the corrupt tax collector who have swindled people out of more than they were meant to be taken and Jesus looks up at him again once to one says you I'm coming to your house this day or that amazing conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman again Jewish Lord prohibited from having that conversation but there he goes up to her by the well he'd never met her before and yet says to her you have had five husbands already and the man you are now living with is not your husband or the rich young ruler who comes to

[16:02] Jesus saying what must I do to inherit eternal life and he goes through the law all the different things that he's done and he seems like he's lived a pretty good life but Jesus knowing that he is rich says to him there's one more thing you can do let go of all of your riches and follow me sometimes those words of truth when truth can be so powerfully unsettling when truth meets the patterns of this world with which we are familiar they shake its very foundations and it should not surprise us that Jesus was crucified because truth and love entered everything else that we accept as versions of the truth but which are not the voice of the king can become so deeply challenging because when love and truth that belong together land in our own lives in that way that are close up and personal we will be shaken we will be disturbed the big thing is you're not just a number you're not a category he wants to speak to you as much as anybody else and as we draw this to a close now as we come to pray together

I'm going to ask perhaps if the music team would like to resume I'm going to read to you a piece as we come to pray and it's a piece that you may have come across before it was written a few years ago now and it's called the father's love letter somebody took went through scripture and picked out many verses of scripture and put them together to read one piece of communication and when we read them together like this we get the pattern of what God is saying to us in the life of Jesus now there is the danger when we talk in this kind of way that things can collapse into sloppy sentimentalism that would be true if we took leave of scripture scripture but the words I'm about to read to you every single one of these phrases sentences is either a direct quotation from scripture or it's directly derived from scripture and in between each of the sentences there's a reference to where it comes from

I'm not going to read those out but I'm going to place copies of what I'm about to read out there and you can take one and take one home afterwards well as I read these words you might find it helpful to close your eyes or to keep them open but hear these words as not just to somebody else but to you from the King our Father my child you may not know me but I know everything about you I know when you sit down and when you rise up I'm familiar with all your ways even the very hairs on your head are numbered for you were made in my image in me you live and move and have your being for you are my offspring

I knew you even before you were conceived I chose you when I planned creation you were not a mistake for all the days are written in my book I determine the exact time of your birth and where you would live you are fearfully and wonderfully made I knit you together in your mother's womb and brought you forth on the day you were born I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me I am not distant and angry but am the complete expression of love and it is my desire to lavish my love on you because you are my child and I am your father I offer you more than your earthly father ever could for

I am the perfect father every good gift that you receive comes from my hand for I am your provider and I meet all your needs my plan for your future has always been filled with hope because I love you with an everlasting love my thoughts towards you are countless as the sand on the seashore and I rejoice over you with singing I will never stop doing good to you for you are my treasured possession I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul and I want to show you great and marvellous things if you seek me with all your heart you will find me delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart for it is I who gave you those desires I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine for I am your greatest encourager I'm also the father who comforts you in all your troubles when you are broken hearted

[22 : 08] I am close to you as a shepherd carries a lamb I have carried you close to my heart one day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes and I'll take away all the pain you have ever suffered on this earth I'm your father and I love you easier than as I love my son Jesus for in Jesus my son for you is revealed he is the exact representation of my being he came to demonstrate that I am for you not against you and to tell you that I am not counting your sins Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled his death was the ultimate expression of my love for you I gave up everything I loved that I may gain your love if you receive the gift of my son Jesus you receive me and nothing will ever separate you from my love again come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen I have always been your father and will always be your my question is will you be my child

I am waiting for you love your dad almighty God Lord thank you thank you that though you are the Lord of the whole universe the author of creation and salvation you're close up and personal help us to know that rule in our hearts as that king as the perfect king now and always amen