

# Recognising who Jesus is

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[ 0 : 00 ] Gracious Father, we do thank you for your word and we do pray now that you would help us to focus on it and to understand it and to then leave in light of it.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, John Dixon is an evangelist and he tells this true story that happened a number of years ago in the US of three late teens who hopped on a bus, their local bus for a ride in the US.

They're in a very spirited mood and so when they saw a man sitting by himself at the back of the bus, dressed rather casually, track pants, beanie, that kind of thing, they thought, oh, let's see how far we can push this guy.

And so they started off with a few jokes about him, but the stranger didn't respond. So they turned up the heat and started to insult him directly about his clothes and like. The stranger still didn't respond.

The boys continued this for some time, trying to provoke the man. After all, there was three of them and only one of him. And then the bus was nearing the man's stop. The man stood up and the boys realised that this man was actually much, much bigger than they'd first anticipated.

[ 1 : 07 ] The man, as he passed them to get off the bus, reached into his pocket, pulled out his business card, handed it to them and then got off the bus. The boys very quickly huddled around to see what the card said. And on the next slide, it said, Joe Louis, professional boxer.

Now, for those like myself who don't know their boxing history, this guy would become the heavyweight champion of the world 11 times running. And they just picked a fight with him.

The point is, they did not recognise who this man really was and so did not treat him with the respect or honour he deserved. And as we continue our series in John today, that's really the question for us when it comes to Jesus.

Do we recognise who Jesus truly is? And so treat him with the honour and respect he deserves. As I said last week, we're looking at John's chapters 5 to 10 from now till Easter.

And the theme throughout these chapters is particularly about Jesus's identity, who he is and his work, what he does. But today, Jesus actually ups the ante because he claims to be none other than God, the son.

[ 2 : 15 ] Point one, verse 16. So because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him, we read. Now, before we go much further, for those who weren't here last week, you'll need to know that Jesus healed a lame man last week and told the man to pick up his mat and carry it home.

But he did it on which day for those who are here? The Sabbath day. That's right, Philip. Yeah. Now, God's Sabbath law was about resting from your weekday work.

So telling someone to carry their mat home hardly qualified as breaking God's law. Rather, it broke the Jewish extra laws that they came up with. And it seems this is not the first time Jesus has done this sort of thing on the Sabbath.

Do you notice verse 16 again? Two words. These things. Plural. See, it seems like Jesus had done this sort of thing on the Sabbath before.

And so when this man in verse 15 of last week goes and dobs on Jesus to the Jewish authorities, the Jewish authorities knew Jesus was up to his old tricks again. Or more accurately, up to his old miracles again on the Sabbath.

[ 3 : 31 ] And so because Jesus was breaking their man-made laws, they were persecuting him. But as we saw last week, Jesus was deliberately doing these miracles on the Sabbath to show his identity as the Son of God and to show his work of bringing God's rest.

That's what the Sabbath pointed to. God's rest. Life. In all its wholeness. In fact, that's why John has included this miracle in his book. On the next slide, do you remember the purpose statement for John?

These are written that you may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing have life in his name. But notice here, up there with the underlined part, the titles Christ and Son of God are actually parallel to each other.

They mean the same thing. In fact, they both mean king originally. You see, in the Old Testament, God said every king from David's line will be known as the Anointed One or Christ and a Son of God.

Because the king was meant to carry on God's work, just like a son might carry on his father's work. And so earlier in John's Gospel, on the next slide, Nathanael meets Jesus and then declares, Rabbi, you are the Son of God.

[ 4 : 49 ] You are the king of Israel. See how those two phrases are parallel with each other? Son of God originally meant king of Israel.

And yet, we know, as John does, that Jesus is much, much more, don't we? See, Jesus is literally the Son of God. He is God, the Son, if you like, which makes him the perfect king to continue God's work in the world, doesn't it?

I mean, he's God. And that's what Jesus now wants the Jews to recognize. So instead of saying to them, look, your laws are wrong and silly, he says, verse 17, Jesus said to them, my father is always at work to this very day, and I am working too, he says.

In other words, I'm just doing what my father is doing. And now the Jews accepted that God worked on the Sabbath. And they knew God only rested from creating the world, not from sustaining the world.

You see, the sun doesn't rise each morning automatically, says the Bible. It rises because God causes it to rise. I don't know if you've ever realized that. God is the one who sustains our laws of physics, our gravity, our atmosphere, even our bodies.

[ 6 : 12 ] Do you realize the breath of air you just took is because God is sustaining your lungs to take it? We owe God much more than we often realize, don't we?

But here, by claiming to work on the Sabbath like his father, Jesus implies that he is God too. And that the Jews could not accept. Verse 18.

For this reason, they tried all the more to kill him. Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God.

You've heard of the expression, out of the frying pan into the fire? It seems to be what's happening here. And what Jesus is saying, for example, if our father is human, it means we're human as well, doesn't it?

And so by calling God his father, Jesus is implying he is God too. And the Jews saw it, heard it, and understood it. But the Jews rightly believe there is only one God.

[ 7 : 11 ] So for Jesus to claim to be God too, you know, a second God, well, that was so offensive to them that they sought to kill him. Now, I realize this is hard for us to imagine, isn't it?

We've had 2,000 years to get used to the idea that Jesus is also God, God the Son. So for us, we don't feel the shock that the Jews felt. In fact, most days, we are shocked by the latest news.

So on the next slide, here's some shock news, divorce shock. Princess Mary is apparently getting a divorce. Don't worry, it's not true. I've checked it out. They're still in love. Which means the magazine New Ideas should really be called No Idea.

But the point is, while the Jews felt the shock of his statement, we often completely miss it, don't we? We take it for granted. But if we really remember who Jesus is, then wouldn't it help us to see afresh how extraordinary his death for us was?

That God would come to earth to be insulted, rejected, spat on, and then crucified for us.

[ 8 : 20 ] Isn't that extraordinary? Isn't that God worth following? Well, Jesus now goes on to explain that he is not another second God in competition with the true God.

Rather, he's actually one with the Father. For he only does the Father's work. Point to verse 19. Jesus gave them this answer. Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself.

He can only do what he sees his Father doing. Because whatever the Father does, the Son also does. Now, here is the first of three truly statements.

And Jesus begins this first one by saying he only does what the Father does. Now, kids often copy their parents. In fact, I caught my son Tim saying to a car that cut us off the other day, Oh, come on! He got it from his mother. Sorry, Michelle. No, he didn't. Like Father, like Son. Of course, with God, it's always good things, isn't it? And that's what Jesus is saying.

[ 9 : 29 ] Like Father, like Son, in a good way. And if he only does his Father's work, then it's as though they act as one. Perhaps I can try and visualize it for you.

It's on the next slide. It's like those canoe races where the person behind does exactly the same thing as the person in front. And when they do, they kind of work in unity as one, don't they? Or on the next slide, perhaps, you know, Father, Son, we should have just two people there. But that's the kind of idea here. Because Jesus only does the work of God, it means they are united in their work.

Because they are actually one God. In fact, Jesus will later say on the next slide, I and the Father are one. And anyone who has seen me has seen the Father too.

You see, Jesus is not saying to the Jews, he is another second God in rival to the true God. No, no. He's saying he is united to the one true God as the Son.

[ 10 : 30 ] In other words, we're talking about the Trinity, which we've all heard of, I think. Where there are three persons, one God. Bad maths, good theology. But it means if we look at Jesus, we see God.

If we listen to Jesus, we hear God. And if we see the work of Jesus, we see the work of God. And Jesus now goes on to explain that work in the following verses. See verse 20.

He says, For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. Even greater works than the miracles.

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he pleads to give it. For the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.

Here we read that the Father shows Jesus all he does. And so everything that Jesus says and does is from the Father. It's the Father's work, including healing the lame men we saw last week.

[ 11 : 34 ] But then he goes on to say there are two greater works or jobs that Father will show the Son. Do you see those two? It's the work of giving life and judging people.

In the Old Testament, God alone raised the dead and gave them life. And God alone was the one that everyone would one day answer to. But now the Father has entrusted both lots of work to his Son.

And people might say he's gone to meet his Maker, but Jesus says he's come to meet me. And as the judge, Jesus determines who he gives life to and who he won't.

And that life is both spiritual and physical, eternal life, as we'll see. But for now, do you see how the Father has made the Son central to all his work, hasn't he?

And especially the work of giving life and judging all. In fact, in each of these truly statements, Jesus talks about those two jobs, giving life and judging.

[ 12 : 36 ] But in each of these truly statements, there's also something else he focuses on. And here, it's the why. Why God has done this. Do you see verse 23?

God has entrusted all this judgment and giving life to the Son. Verse 23, So that all may honour the Son, just as they honour the Father. Whoever does not honour Jesus, does not honour the Father who sent him.

God did not entrust all his work to the Son because the Father is lazy or needed a break. It's because verse 20, the Father loves the Son. And verse 23, wants the Son to be honoured by all. And all will honour him. Either willingly now, as our life giver and saviour, or unwillingly later, as our judge, when every knee will bow.

But all this means we cannot honour God without honouring Jesus. And that in turn means the focus of every Christian should be Christ.

[ 13 : 42 ] The focus of every church should be on Jesus. It's why our mission statement on the front of your bulletins is about gathering and growing in Christ. For God has made Jesus the centre of his work, that all may honour him.

So any church or version of Christianity that does not have Jesus at the centre is a dud and cannot honour the Father. I mean, whose name is in the word Christian?

A friend of mine used to be in a grunge band back in the day when grunge was popular. And he wrote some Christian songs for teenagers. And they used to go around and do high school scripture

seminars when the government allowed it back then.

And they would play a set of songs with a brief introduction about what the song is about. And in the process, you know, talk about Jesus and so on. And then afterwards, we would have discussion groups with the kids.

And I was often leading one of those discussion groups. I remember asking the kids what they thought one time. And this teenage boy said, oh, the music's pretty cool, but they just keep talking about Jesus.

[14:50] But rightly so. For the Father has given the Son the work of giving life and judging people so that all might honour the Son. Which means Jesus must be central to our church and to our lives because we cannot honour God without honouring him.

But how does Jesus give this life? Well, he tells us in the next truly statement, verse 24, Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

Here again, in this truly statement, Jesus talks about life and judgment, doesn't he? But here he also tells us how we receive life. It says, by hearing his word and believing the one who sent him. Of course, because the Father and the Son are one, you could also say, hearing God's word and believing in Christ. For when we believe in Christ, we have spiritual, eternal life.

Notice, now. Do you notice that? The person who believes has eternal life, present tense, and will not be judged but has already crossed over from death to life.

[16:14] You see, the moment we believe in Jesus, we begin our eternal life spiritually where we are forgiven and given a place in God's family forever. Perhaps I can, I tried to represent it visually again on the next slide with my diagram.

So at the top is the spiritual, eternal life. And the moment we believe in Jesus on the right-hand side, we begin that eternal life. And that continues, well, for eternity.

It's eternal life, right? Even after we die in this world, our spiritual, eternal life will continue so that we're never away from God. And what's more, in verse 24, we're told we will not be judged.

In other words, the moment we believe in Jesus, we are acquitted, free from judgment. And that ought to give us great assurance when we meet Jesus on judgment day, wouldn't it?

I've never been taken to court, but I can imagine it would be a scary thing to go, particularly if your eternity was up for grabs. And so, wouldn't it be a great comfort knowing the outcome already?

[17:22] Imagine going to court when you already knew for certain that the judge would acquit you for all your crimes, all your sins. Imagine going to court knowing the judge would declare you free to go because someone has already paid for our sins.

I mean, you wouldn't mind going to court then, would you? But what Jesus seems to be particularly emphasizing here is how we receive this eternal life and freedom from judgment.

It's by hearing the word and believing in him. And so, if we want people to believe and have eternal life too, what do they need to hear? His word.

That's the logic, isn't it? And so, this is especially our job as a church, that people might hear, believe, and receive. That's why on the front of your bulletins down the bottom there under the mission statement is how it happens by prayerfully proclaiming and promoting God's word in love. For according to Jesus himself, this is how people receive eternal life. Now, I know people say churches should be on about providing meals for the needy, driving the sick to doctors and helping the unemployed get jobs and so on, providing for people's physical needs.

[18:42] I even know of one guy who said churches should also run dating services for singles because he was having trouble finding a wife. Now, they're all good things we should do.

I'm not sure about the dating service, but we should do what we can to love and care for others, to provide for their physical needs. That's part of honouring Christ. But we should especially do what we can to share his word because that provides not just for their life in this world, but it gives them the opportunity for life in eternity, doesn't it?

In fact, it's interesting that even Jesus did not come primarily to care for others' physical needs. Otherwise, why didn't he heal everyone at the pool of Bethesda last week?

He didn't, did he? But he healed one man, a lame man, with his word on the Sabbath to show that he came especially to bring life eternal, God's rest to those who believe his word.

But when does this eternal life happen? Well, we've seen the spiritual side. Jesus now goes to unpack the timing of it all a bit more in our third truly statement. Verse 25, Very truly I tell you, a

time, we're talking about when now, 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.

[ 20 : 12 ] For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and therefore give life. Notice here in verse 25, we're talking about when, the time, and Jesus says the time has now come when the dead will hear and live.

It's clearly he's talking about that spiritual eternal life that we have when we hear his voice, his word, and believe. But then Jesus goes to talk about the physical eternal life on judgment day, verse 27, and God has given Jesus authority to judge because he is the Son of Man from our first reading.

Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice, his word, and come out. Those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.

By myself I can 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. As we're seeing, God has given authority to judge, or he is the Son of Man from our first reading.

But notice verse 28, the time for this judgment is coming. Notice there's no and is now here, like verse 25, is there? It's in the future entirely.

[ 21 : 37 ] And in that future day, everyone, did you notice, will hear the voice of Jesus, his word, and everyone will rise. Did you notice that? All people will come out of their graves. Something Jesus will point to when he calls Lazarus out of his tomb later on.

He will raise us all, whether we've been buried or cremated, and give us all a new body. But only the good, that is, those who believe, verse 24, will come to literally a resurrection of life, a new body to enjoy life eternal in the new creation.

But those who have done evil, that is, those who do not believe, will come to literally a resurrection which implies a new body, of condemnation, he says.

They will too rise with an immortal body, but not to enjoy life with God in a new creation, but to suffer eternal condemnation apart from God, what the Bible calls hell.

Unless we think this is not fair or too harsh, Jesus reminds us in verse 30 that his judgment is just. He judges fairly based on what he hears. Can you see why people really need to hear the word of the gospel?

[ 22 : 53 ] Can you see why it's especially our job? Well, I don't have time to unpack the following verses. It would be great if we could because it talks about the evidence Jesus has that he is telling the truth, even if it seems far fetched to us as it surely did to the Jews.

He lists all these witnesses which I've listed for you in your outline. For us today we actually have the New Testament which is shown to be really reliable. In fact, the New Testament is more reliable than the writings of Buddha, the Quran, and even Roman history about the emperors like Tiberius. In fact, I've got a helpful video about how reliable the New Testament is that aired on Channel 7 some time ago if you're interested. What Jesus is saying here is true and so it matters how we respond, doesn't it?

you have all heard Jesus' word this morning and so firstly, do you believe? Verse 24. Have you put your trust in him for life?

And if you haven't yet, then please do. It makes an eternity of difference. In fact, we don't normally do this so I've written a prayer of commitment.

[ 24 : 08 ] If you would like to put your trust in Jesus this morning, I'm going to ask Vijay to do it at the end of my sermon. Have a think about it if you haven't yet done it. And for us who have, then two things.

First, do we honour the son in our lives? That was why God has entrusted his work to his son, so that he might be honoured. Do we honour him whether it's by listening and doing his word, even if it's sometimes hard to accept?

Or even if it's a long passage? I mean, how many of us inwardly groaned when we saw how long it was today? Oh, it's a long one today. And do we honour him by the way we treat his people, even those with little?

As Jesus said, whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me? Or do we honour him by not being ashamed of him? Shame is the opposite of honour after all. I remember being at university one time and the topic of religion came up in our tutorial class and I remember being very quiet,

slightly sinking in my seat, not saying a word about being a Christian.

You see, I cared more about what my peers would think of me than about honouring Christ. I remember shortly after the class ended, I walked out of the room and within seconds of walking out of that room, these words popped into my head that Jesus said, it's from Mark's gospel, actually, he said, if anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this generation, the son of man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his father's glory with his holy angels.

[ 25 : 38 ] Immediately, I said sorry to God and thanked him that he always forgives because of his amazing grace. It is much easier to talk about God than Jesus, isn't it?

You mention God, it's okay, ish. You mention Jesus, the temperature in the room just goes up. But we're not to be ashamed of him, rather we're to honour him by being known as someone who follows him.

And second, for us who do believe, then we have to do what we can to share his word that others might have life too. Whether it's by promoting his word through what we do, like praying for people to hear the word, serving here at church so that people can come and hear the word, or giving so that people can hear the word through missionaries and the like.

In fact, there's a guy at our church who struggles with a form of autism. He lives on his own, he doesn't have much, he finds life quite difficult. He just found out last week that Yarra Water had overcharged him by a couple hundred dollars.

He was very excited. He rang me to tell me and said, and I want to give some money to the church this Sunday, tonight, so that the gospel can keep being shared. Isn't that great?

[ 26 : 50 ] Here is someone who's promoting Christ's word through his generosity. I said, it's okay, you don't have to, no, no, I want to. Or we can share the word by proclaiming it in some way.

I know many here at our church, particularly the morning congregations are often seeing doctors all the time and they've mentioned to me that they try and provoke a conversation. They say things like, oh, I have people praying for me, or I'm not worried Jesus is with me, or I'm content because I know where I'm going when I die.

That one gets a weird look. In fact, I think I've even told you before about Florence from my old church who used to share the message about Jesus with the people in the bed next to her and she said to me, the best thing Andrew is, they can't get away.

Well, those three boys who are having a go at Joe Louis no doubt felt very foolish for not recognising who he was that day. But let me tell you, Jesus is no boxing heavyweight champion of the world.

He is like the heavyweight champion of the universe. Jesus is the son, the king, the life giver, the judge. And so it really does matter that we recognise who he is and believe in him.

[ 28 : 00 ] If we don't, we'll feel more than foolish on that day of judgment. And if we do, then we ought to seek on him with our lives and share his word with others that they too might know life eternal that we know.

Love you.