

Christ Shows His Greatness

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: 09 March 2014

Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] Now tonight for a little time we're going to look at Luke chapter 20, Gospel of Luke chapter 20 and these verses we read, verses 1 to 26.

We're going to take the whole of the passage, it is related, these several parts of it are related together as we'll hopefully see. We saw last time as we finished off with chapter 19 that Jesus had arrived in Jerusalem, we saw something of that arrival in the previous passage and at the end of the chapter there that he had come to the temple and had thrown out of the temple, those who were abusing it and taken it over for himself.

And from this point onwards over the next couple of chapters we'll see that Jesus has effectively taken over the temple because it's not just through literally but it's through spiritually as well. Because of course he himself in many ways is the temple and he himself had predicted that the temple that he would build, the spiritual temple, would replace the one that they were so concerned for, this material temple here in Jerusalem.

And that's why you find here at the beginning of chapter 20 he was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel. Now these verses from here to verse 44 right through to near the end of the chapter here are taken up with a series of questions.

[1 : 39] And it's interesting the way that Luke has brought these together and set down these questions for us. They are questions that are especially set around the issue of Christ's authority.

And that means these passages are not loosely tied together. They are if you like all strung onto this great cord or spiritual strand of Christ's authority.

And it begins here by asking him plainly by what authority he was doing these things. And the issue really is on Christ's right to use the temple as he was using it for this kind of teaching and preaching that he himself was setting out for the people.

Who has given you? They are asking him the right to do this. And that fits in with Luke's purpose in writing this gospel.

I mean all the way through you remember we've said that one of the things that comes across again and again to us as Luke himself repeats it. We're not repeating it just for the sake of it.

[2 : 46] It's Luke that keeps on presenting it to us. And that of course is the question of Christ's identity as to who he is. And you have to take that with you as well into these passages where he's now in Jerusalem.

Now having arrived at the temple. Now having made if you like a takeover of the temple for his own teaching. For his ministry to continue there till he is taken out and crucified.

In all of that the Lord's Luke's purpose in identifying Jesus comes across to us very strongly. Who is this man?

What is he about? What is his life about? Who is he as we relate to him? Because obviously that is Luke's great purpose too. It's not just simply in presenting to us Christ and presenting to us who he is.

And what he came into the world to do. And what his life and his death and his resurrection are about. It's all about also that you and I in coming to this.

[3 : 50] And generations before us and after us as well will have this aim. That we will come to say of ourselves. What is this Jesus to me?

What have I made of him? Where does he fit into my life? Is he for me the very person that Luke is presenting him as?

The Lord of my life. As well as the Lord of everything else. Well what comes across to us in these verses tonight and indeed the following ones too.

Is the greatness of Christ. And if we have come to this passage and left it without really having been struck by the greatness of Christ.

Then we have not really dealt with it properly. Because it really does present to us different aspects of the greatness of Jesus. In the way that Luke presents him here.

[4 : 47] Answering these questions that focus on his own authority. And the thing that strikes you again and again. As you just look at the way he answered. And see the way that he went about dealing with these issues.

You really come to the conclusion again and again and again. What a great figure this is. What an immense person and personality and presence this Jesus really is.

And you can see his greatness in these three things. If we divide it up into the three passages. As you find it there with different headings in our translation there. First of all you find his greatness as he answers a challenge to his authority.

Right down to verse 8. Then verses 9 through to verse 18. You'll find his greatness as he clarifies the choice that people face.

Where he speaks of himself as the cornerstone. The stone that's rejected by people and yet comes to be the chief cornerstone in the temple. And you'll see his greatness as he sees through religious pretense.

[6 : 02] Verses 19 to 26. Where there is an attempt by duplicity. By cunning crafty pretense.

To capture Jesus through something that he says. Well let's look at these three aspects of the passage. And try and see where the greatness of Jesus comes through.

You see his greatness as he answers a challenge to his authority. You'll see the people mentioned there. The chief priests and the scribes with the elders. Now they were all in different positions of authority.

But they all had to do with the religious leadership of the time. Different functions. But nevertheless they are the three groups. The main groups. Along with the Sadducees that are mentioned later in the passage.

They are to do with the religious leadership. And thus as things develop. As things have reached the point they're now at. And as they will develop between now and the crucifixion.

[7 : 02] The thing that becomes very obvious is that these religious leaders. Are themselves the most hostile to the person of Christ. They want to get rid of him.

They see him as a threat to their own authority. Chapter 19 and verse 48 there. You see they did not find anything they could do.

For the people were hanging on to his words. They were seeking to destroy him. But they couldn't because the people found him not just a popular figure. But they were listening intently to his message.

But these leaders were out to destroy him. They had made up their minds that this was what they had to do. Therefore he was a threat to their authority.

And that's why they brought this question to him. Tell us by what authority you do these things. Or who is it that gave you this authority? I mean the very question itself is an evidence of their blindness.

[8 : 09] Blindness gives people an illegitimate boldness in the presence of God. You'll find it frequently in our own society.

People dismiss the idea of the Bible being true. Or even in the existence of God. They will still blaspheme. They'll still use the name of God. They will still act arrogantly and boldly against the teaching of the gospel.

That's what we're confronted with in evangelizing for Christ. That's the kind of people we've become by and large. Yes of course that means that there's a whole mission field there.

And that means that out of that very often you'll find people responding to the gospel very positively. Compared to people who have known it for a long time. And have been under it formally.

And yet have hardened their hearts against it. But here are people who are blind to the issue of what Jesus is about. And what he's saying is who gave you this authority to do these things or to speak as you're speaking.

[9 : 13] Who gave you this authority? Where is it from? They mean of course the casting out of the temple of the people that were misusing it there in the previous passage.

And also the teaching that he's now engaged in preaching the gospel. Tell us by what authority you do these things. Or who it is that gave you this authority. And of course as you read the gospel of God.

As you followed Luke in his gospel. You and I as you read this are able to say. How dare they say this? This is the son of God.

This is God's own beloved son. This is God in our nature. This is God on his mission to save us. And yet here are people actually questioning his authority.

His rights. And doesn't that strike a chord with you in today's society as well? We're obsessed with rights. We're obsessed with personal rights.

[10:16] With individual rights. We're obsessed with the rights of certain groups that insist that their rights must actually be honored and met. Even if their rights contradict other people's rights.

And especially if they contradict Christian rights. But the Bible reminds us that whatever people make of their rights and of human rights.

There is one whose rights always dictate to ours. And that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has the right to deal with his temple as he sees fit.

He has the right to say what he knows is right to say. He has the right to claim our attention. He has the right to claim his authority for the whole world. He has the right to say to people.

This is how you ought to live. And this is what you must do. He has the right to say this is my word of truth. And you should honor it. He has the right that covers all aspects of human life.

[11:17] And yet. How often do you hear anyone really standing up and saying. Listen. The rights of Jesus Christ are paramount. That is your business and that is my business.

That is what we have to do. That is our business as the people of God. To stand for the rights of King Jesus. But he responds to that in such a wonderful way.

You can see his greatness comes out here as we have said. Now he says I will ask you a question. Tell me was the baptism of John from heaven or from man.

This is of course John the Baptist. And they discussed it with one another saying. If we say from heaven. Well he will say to us. Why did you not then believe him? But if we say well it is from man. All the people will stone us to death. For they are convinced that John was indeed a prophet. So they said to him. We don't know.

[12:17] They took the kind of route that many politicians take. They just evaded the issue. They knew they were caught on the horns of a dilemma.

Christ had put them in a corner. And they knew they couldn't get out of it. If they answered one way or the other. So they said we don't know. But you notice something very interesting here.

The contrast. Between the way they went about answering Christ's question. And the way that he went about answering theirs. As soon as they had asked by what authority.

He was doing these things. He answered them. Just like that. He answered them by throwing a question back at them. In the way that he did. But when he then asked this question.

In reply to theirs. They couldn't answer instantly. They had to have a conference. Isn't that interesting? They had to have this conference together.

[13:17] They discussed it with one another. Before they actually came to do anything. In return to Jesus. You see that really tells you. The greatness of Jesus. Whatever he is faced with.

Whatever he is confronted with. Whatever he is asked. He has got an instant response. He doesn't have to spend time thinking about it. He doesn't have to go away and consult with other people. What to do about it. These religious leaders do. And that is what shows up. Their deficiency. Their smallness.

Even though they are questioning the authority of this Christ. That is one of the great things about our Savior. That he has an instant ability to deal with your problem.

Whatever you bring to him. You know he is not going to say to you. You need to leave this for a week or so. I will come back and I will give you an answer then. When you are in desperate straits.

[14:19] When you are burdened with your sin. And the guilt of your sin. When you have something in your life that is really weighing you down. When you have something that is troubling you. When there is something on your mind.

When there is something really so important to you. That there and then you have simply got to bring it to the Lord. And pour out your heart before him. You are not then bringing it to a Savior.

Who is going to say to you. I can't deal with this just now. You need to give me more time. I need to discuss it with someone else. And they are asking.

Where do you have this authority? And Jesus is showing his greatness. And showing indeed his authority. By saying to them. Instantly. I am going to ask something of you.

And they can't. Answer him without confidence. They are in a fix. They are caught in a dilemma. So what they do is just evade the issue. They answered.

[15:18] They did not know. Where the authority of John came from. And Jesus said to them. Neither will I tell you. By what authority I do these things. It wasn't that Jesus was being difficult.

And didn't want to explain things to people. But they had just simply. Arrogantly demanded of him. That he gave them an answer to this question.

And the fact that they couldn't answer his question. Means. They had lost the right to make any such demands. And therefore he said. To them. Let's just leave it at that.

I am not going to tell you. By what authority I do these things. As a matter of fact. He had already made it clear. By whose authority. The authority of God.

That he was doing such things. So you can see the greatness of Jesus. As he answers a challenge. To his authority. And in that you find.

[16:18] One aspect of many. Of the Savior's suitability. And qualification. And authority. To be a Savior to yourself.

To meet with your needs. To uphold you in your life. To take care of all your burdens. Secondly. You see his greatness. As he clarifies. The choice that people face. And you find that. In this parable. And in the way that. They and Jesus respond to it.

The parable. Of the vineyard. That was let out. To tenants. By the owner of the vineyard. Something that was quite. Commonly done. It appears. Now this is.

Something which. Jesus. Takes from the Old Testament. Very common. In the Old Testament. To find. Israel as a people. Depicted by.

[17:15] Or pictured. As a vineyard. That God has planted. And God himself. Comes to the vineyard. Looking that it should. Bear fruit. For him. And in.

Passages in the Old Testament. Particularly. In the prophets. You'll find that. God is. Accusing. The people. Of being. A fruitless vineyard.

Instead of. Bringing forth. Grapes. How then he says. Does it bring forth. Wild grapes. Why is it so neglected. Why doesn't it produce. The thing it's designed. To do. And the thing that God.

The owner of it. Requires. From. The likes of Isaiah. Chapter 5. And other passages. In the Old Testament. Jesus is taking.

These. Images. And applying them. There and then. To his own situation. Showing you the scope. Of course. Of Christ's. Understanding. Of himself. And of his position.

[18:09] And of Israel. As a people. And of. All the issues. Involved in that. Now what was it. About this. Vineyard. A man planted the vineyard. He let it out.

To tenants. And then he sent. Servants. Three times. To those who were tenants. Of the vineyard. Lord. But they mistreated them. And sent them away. Empty handed.

Now. That means. That represents. The way that God. Sent. Prophets. To Israel. As a people. To declare his will.

To them. To reveal the truth. To them. To appeal to them. To come back to him. When they had gone astray. After other. Deities. After idols. For example.

You can see. One of the main. Places you see. That is. In the New Testament. In fact. In Acts. Chapter. Seven. Where. Stephen.

[19:05] Shortly before. His being stoned. To death. Gave a great speech. Setting out. The history. Of Israel. And various. Prominent.

Events. From it. But in that. He said this. Among other things. At verse 51. You. Stiff. Necked. People. Uncircumcised.

In heart. And ears. You. Always. Resist. The Holy Spirit. As your fathers. Did. So. Do you. Which. Of the prophets. Did not your fathers.

Persecute. And they killed. Those who announced. Beforehand. The coming. Of the righteous. One. Whom you have now. Betrayed. And murdered. You who received. The law.

As delivered. By angels. And did not keep it. In other words. He was. Really. Going over the same. Fact. For the people then. That God. Had sent.

[19 : 59] In the history. Of the people. Many times. Messengers. To them. As his spiritual. Vineyard. They had dismissed. Them. It had had.

Catastrophic. Effects. And results. The captivity. In Babylon. For 70 years. Being one of them. And still. As Jesus.

Well knew. They were actually. Resisting God. And they were resisting. The message. God was sending. So. The parable. Moves on. The owner.

Of the vineyard. Said. What will I then do? I will send. My beloved. Son. Perhaps. They will respect him. But when the tenants. Saw him.

They said to themselves. This is the heir. Let us kill him. So that the inheritance. May be ours. Of course. The son. Of the owner.

[20 : 54] Of the vineyard. Represents. Jesus. Himself. The father. Sent him. Into the vineyard. In this world. Into this world.

To bring. The greatest. Of all. Messages. And revelation. To the people. And here he is. And he is in the temple. And he is preaching. In the temple. And he is declaring.

This teaching. In the temple. That draws attention. To himself. And that ought to have. Made it clear. To them. Who he was. And what he was about. And whose authority. He was exercising. And of course. He knew. That they were rejecting that. And so he. Spoke this parable. To them. And it is very interesting.

Isn't it. That Luke uses these words. That Jesus spoke. Of course. What shall I do. I will send. My beloved son. And as you go back. Into the gospel of Luke.

[21 : 50] Two passages. We looked at already. Some time past now. Chapter 3. Verse 22. The baptism of Jesus. Chapter 9. Verse 35. The transfiguration of Jesus. And there is a voice from heaven.

On each occasion. That says. This is my son. The beloved one. And Jesus. Here is. Capturing those words.

Building them into this parable. So that. This might trigger their attention. Where they heard. At his baptism. These great words from heaven.

This is my son. The beloved one. This is my beloved son. Making it clear. Luke is. That Jesus is talking here. About himself. That he represented himself.

By this person. Of the son. Of the owner. Of the vineyard. This is my. Beloved son. I will send. My beloved son. And what did they do.

[22 : 51] With the son. Of the owner. Well. They said. This is the heir. Let's kill him. So that the inheritance. May be ours. And they threw him out of the vineyard.

And killed him. They wouldn't kill him in the vineyard. It would defile the ground. That's what happened. With Christ in Jerusalem. He wasn't put to death.

In the city. But outside. Rejected. But outside. Spiritually. And. Theologically as well. Because the people were making it clear.

By that. That he was not for them. That they were not going to defile. The sanctuary of the city. As it were. With his blood. And that of course.

Is an anticipation. Of the cross. And there tonight. For you. Is the very crux. Of the mission. Of Jesus Christ.

[23 : 53] He was taken outside. Outside of Jerusalem. And he was put to death. But ask yourself.

The question. Who died. Who was put to death. To whom. Did this happen. Who was actively engaged. In this. It was.

The son of God. In our nature. You must never say. This was the human nature. Of Jesus. That suffered. And died. You must never say.

This is a mere man. That died. You must never say. That the son of God. Is not directly involved. In the death. That took place. On Calvary's cross. It is the death.

Of the son of God. In our nature. The death. Is the death. Of this person. What you ascribe. To a nature. You ascribe. To the person. And who is the person. The person.

[24 : 48] The person. The person. The person. The person. The person. Is the son of God. There is no more. Despicable act. Than to dismiss. The son of God.

Who died. At Calvary. John Owen. Says. Somewhere in his writings. That great theologian. Says. This is. The most heinous sin.

Of which. Any human being. Is capable. That you would actually. Reject. The son of God. Offered in the gospel. As the son of God. Who died. On the cross.

Of Calvary. Why is it the most heinous sin? Because of who he is. That's Luke's great question.

Who is this man? Who is he? He's the son of God.

And who is he now? He is the son of God. Approaching his crucifixion. He's the son of God.

Approaching his rejection. He's the son of God. Over whom.

[25 : 42] Human beings. Like you and I. Must make a great decision. What is it? Well it's the choice we face. What will the owner of the vineyard.

Do to them? He will come and destroy. Those tenants. And give the vineyard to others. When they heard this. They said. Surely not. Now there's a. There's a. Something in that too.

Where you see the greatness of Jesus. The greatness of Jesus. In his preaching. That must have been. Absolutely amazing. To hear.

Jesus preach. Why do I say that. In this context. Because. There in verse 16.

You find evidence. That the people. Were so. Locked into. To his teaching. In this parable. That it was just. So real. To them. That their instant reaction.

[26 : 40] Was. Oh no. Surely not. It was just. As if it was really happening. Before their eyes. The greatness. The greatness. The greatness. Of Jesus.

Came through. In his preaching. In the way he spoke. In the authority of his words. Nobody ever spoke. They said. Like this man.

That was. Isn't that interesting. That was. That was the. Response of those. Who had been sent. To apprehend him. To take him into custody. In John chapter 7.

Where you find. The second incident. In John's gospel. Where Nicodemus. Is mentioned.

Nicodemus. Spoke up. When the council. The Sanhedrin.

Asked the people. Who had come back. Empty handed. Why have you not. Brought him. And the reply was. Nobody ever spoke.

[27 : 34] Like this man. What an amazing answer. To that question. You'd expect them to say. Well. We didn't have enough opportunity. They might have said. Well. The people just wouldn't allow us. To do it.

That's not what they said. What they said was. Nobody ever spoke. Like this man. In other words. They were saying. How could we possibly. Apprehend. A person of this stature.

Somebody who spoke. The way this man spoke. With the authority. With which he spoke. We couldn't possibly. Arrest him. It's just totally. Beyond.

Our ability. And Nicodemus. As he spoke up there. Just in passing. You notice. That he was. Immediately.

When he. When he. He spoke up. In favor of. Of the Lord. That. He should not be. Dismissed. Or conem. Without being heard. For himself. Are you.

[28 : 32] They said. Also. From Galilee. They immediately. Put him along. With Christ. And with those. Followers of Christ. Because he spoke up. In favor of him. Just as you and I. Will be.

When we come to side. With the Lord. We will be regarded. Then. By those. Who are hostile. To him. With contempt. Are you also. Of Galilee. Do you belong.

To that rubble. Surely. You're not really. Going to side. With them. That's what Nicodemus. Had to face. That's what he overcame. That's what he had to. Go through. But come back to our passage.

This is the choice. We face. This is. When he says. When they said. Surely not. But he looked. Directly at him. And said. What is the endless. That is written. That stone. That the builders.

Rejected.

Has become the corner stone. Everyone who falls. On that stone. Will be broken. To pieces. And when it falls. On anyone. It will crush. In Psalm 118.

[29 : 28] We sang these verses. A short time ago. And what it says. Is really this. That the. Examination of Christ. By those who examined him.

While it was true. They found no fault in him. Yet they rejected him. They didn't accept him at all. As their Messiah. As their Savior. He was rejected.

And despised. Yet he's become. The chief corner stone. The spiritual temple. That God was building. Has as its chief corner stone.

Now some people think. This is a foundation stone. Other people think. The chief corner stone. Is the one at the top. That holds the building. The pressure of the building. As it comes together. At

the top.

Whatever way you deal with it. It is the chief stone. In the building. It's the one. That really determines. The shape of the whole. Of the spiritual temple.

[30 : 28] Christ. Is. That stone. Everything else. Is built in relation to him. All his people. Are spiritual stones.

As Peter puts it. You are. Living stones. Being built up by God. Christ himself. Being the chief.

Cornerstone. But you notice what he's saying. Everyone who falls on that stone.

Will be broken to pieces. And when it falls on anyone. It will crush him. Now that's a very interesting distinction.

And it relates to the choice that we make. If we too choose to reject him. Then this stone is going to fall on us. And it's going to crush us.

And that's inevitable. It's the consequence. Of rejecting Christ. If we accept him. Then we're going to be broken.

[31 : 30] On this stone. What that means is that. Our own lives. Will be broken up. In terms of. Ceasing to be. What we were.

And coming to live a new life. Thank you. Thank you.