

What do you think of Christ?

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: 27 October 2013

Preacher: Rev. Douglas MacKeddie

[0 : 00] I would like us for a little time this morning to turn with word to words via bread in Luke's gospel chapter 23.

And seeking the Lord's enabling, I want us to address our thoughts on a particular theme, the characters that lie behind some of these statements are not the ones that I'm so concerned about as the statement that they make concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I won't be confining myself to words in Luke 23, but if I can use that as a platform to set the theme.

But maybe by way of introduction to begin with. I remember as a young lad, when I came into the free church first, unlike you folks, I didn't have the privilege of sitting under the gospel of Christ preached so beautifully and so clearly.

And it became, it was something that was new to me. And I always remember a certain gentleman who used to be mocked for his preaching at one level, because throughout the sermon and every single sermon he preached, he would use the phrase, what think ye of Christ?

[1 : 34] And it became a bit of a joke. I can't say I liked it very much. And I thought, wait a minute, what's this all about? I know the man was a man who just wanted to repeat this saying.

It obviously meant a lot to him. And I began to think about it myself, you know, in reality, what do I think of Christ? Or maybe if I put it another way, what do people who watch my life think of that Christ whom I profess to believe in?

What do they see? What do they understand? There is no doubt that as far as Jesus was concerned, his life, his whole witness, his testimony, even what we read here this morning, had a bearing upon everybody that he spoke to.

Many, of course, wanted to ignore him. Many didn't like the things of which he was speaking. But once the words of Jesus start and begin to penetrate into your heart, into your thinking, once your conscience is beginning to be disturbed, then you know that this Jesus, this man, of whom many people in the New Testament speak, whatever their background, whatever reason they have for addressing this Jesus in this way, there is no doubt that an influence has been born upon them. Now again, there is no doubt that an influence has been born upon all of you here this morning, you especially who are sitting at the table. Please, I'm not ignoring those who are sitting aside from the table.

[3 : 19] But for this moment, you know, what do you think of Christ? What does he mean to you? If somebody asks you, as a follower of the Lord Jesus, what do you think?

It's very interesting when you come alongside some of these characters, who probably even hated Jesus, and yet their testimony seems to suggest something of an influence upon them.

I'm not suggesting that they were saved because of the words that they used, but there is no doubt, wherever Jesus went, whatever he said, it was having an influence.

And here we find one man who has a very interesting character. He says to us, concerning Jesus, he says, I find no fault in this man.

Profound statement? Well, not necessarily, maybe. But certainly it's a statement that will bring judgment upon the man who said it. Because what he is saying is true.

[4 : 26] He could not find any fault in this man, Jesus. And yet at the same time, he was going to chastise him and let him go. But he was going to chastise him for no fault.

Three times in this passage, we are told that this man has no fault in him. For many of us, I'm sure, before we ever came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we would go along with what Pilate was saying here, or whatever many others would say, that I find no fault in this man.

When you and I came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, this man took on a much greater perspective for us. Why?

Because now we began, by faith, to see him, not just purely as a man, just as a human being, but we see him as something greater and something different.

For Pilate, whatever might have been his reasons for saying what he did and doing what he did, all we can suggest is that there was a lot of blackness and darkness in his mind and certainly a great degree of unbelief.

[5 : 47] But if I take you a little bit further, if I take you for a moment or two to the cross itself, there are situations that arise there that really cause us to stand back and to think about this Lord Jesus.

And in this I hope those of us who are sitting out from the table might take note. Because around the cross at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, there were many people of all shades and colors. I don't mean physically, but in terms of their political affiliation, in terms of their religious affiliations. Many were there just for the fun of it.

There was another crucifixion. And let's go to a crucifixion. There's nothing much going on in town. Let's go to a crucifixion. And I'm sure that many of them who had gone to that crucifixion didn't for one moment anticipate what was going to happen.

In fact, one man, he is there. In fact, he's one of the soldiers. He's got an important job to do in this whole crucifixion situation. Listen to what he said often in Mark's Gospel in chapter 15 and at verse 39.

[7 : 04] This is what he says. And when the centurion which stood over against him saw that he so cried out and gave up the ghost, he said, truly, this man is the son of God.

Now I find that very interesting. And again, I'm not suggesting in that statement that he is professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Maybe he is. But there is no doubt for us, someone like him who was involved in the crucifixion of our Savior, the influence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the word and testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, was so great upon him, he could not deny it.

And he found himself uttering these words. Truly, this man was the son of God.

He could have said many such things. He could have said, unlike Pilate, he could have said, this man's done nothing wrong. Maybe he could say that this Jesus was being cruelly treated and he had done nothing wrong.

[8 : 25] But he identifies Jesus in a particular way. And it's what happens, I think, is it not, when you and I come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever might have been our perceptions before of this Jesus, this man.

Maybe like the centurion, you found yourself at one moment saying, ah, he is the son of God. And that speaks volumes, that speaks volumes, doesn't it?

Speaks volumes to your heart and to your soul. When you, under the agency of the spirit of Christ, can testify that this truly is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ, this centurion, whatever his background might have been, whatever religion he had, I doubt if he had very much, but all the testimony of that moment when Jesus was crucified there, and when he heard Jesus speaking in the way that he did, he cried out, truly, this man is the son of God. And if that was the case for the centurion, think how much more opposite it was for the thief on the cross to identify with this Jesus in the way that he did.

[9 : 53] You remember, up until the point, to this point, the two thieves were mocking and ridiculing the Lord Jesus Christ. But then we find that one of them has a change of heart.

Huge change of heart. Something is developing strongly within his heart and soul. And what is happening? He is saying to us, is he not, to the whole world, to every generation ever since, when he says to his friends, who is mocking him continually, he is a change of heart.

He says, he tells him to be quiet. Do you not realize? We receive our due rewards.

We receive our due rewards. That he acknowledged, unlike what was the case beforehand, if thou be the Son of God, save thyself and us.

But now this man is saying differently. This Jesus, of whom he is probably looking up to, or trying to look up to, in his own pain, and his own agony, knowing that he is receiving his just rewards because of his deeds against society, and yet, the miracle of redemption is taking place in this man's soul and heart.

[11 : 23] And he says to his friend, his past friend of criminology, he's saying to him, we receive our due rewards.

Where do you place yourself in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ and what Jesus has done? Think of this thief on the cross just for a moment or two.

Because, with all the work in which he was involved in prior to this moment, there is one thing sure. He wasn't contemplating eternity, salvation.

Nothing of these things was in his mind. I've often thought to myself that what changed the heart of this man, and it's amazing, you know, how two people can sit under the gospel.

One is saved, and one is lost. We find it hard, maybe very often, when we see those of our friends holding back and say, no, I don't want this Jesus.

[12 : 41] And you cannot understand that they've heard exactly the same message as you have heard. these two thieves on the cross had heard exactly the same message from Jesus.

What did Jesus cry out? Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing. That was the first statement of Jesus from the cross.

The first utterance, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing. Now, it may be a little bit of conjecture to think that the influence of these words had borne upon this thief.

I think they might have done. And yet, these selfsame words of Jesus had no effect on the other man. Do the words of Jesus have no effect on some of us either?

Does the promise that Jesus makes to us if we repent of our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin? Can we believe that? You folks who are sitting at the table, the very fact that you are here is evidence that that is what you are saying.

[13 : 58] You believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has saved you from your sin. The thief in the cross when he cried out to Jesus, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

Again, what a profound statement. Identifying this Jesus not as someone whom he might mockingly say, save me, but now, in reality, calling upon him, knowing that he is nobody else to turn to.

The last moments of his life here in this world before he is thrust into a lost eternity, there is a thought. Is it not?

To any one of us who are not sheltering under the blood of Christ, not having been assured that if they pass this life even today, where will they be?

For the thief on the cross who repented on the eleventh hour, did he have to do any work in order to receive the crown of righteousness that was laid up for him?

[15 : 08] No. He turned to Jesus and said, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. What was Jesus' response? Well, Jesus knew he wasn't going to be able to come down off that cross and do something for his salvation and redemption.

Jesus turned to him and said, today, thou would be with me in paradise, but what for the other? today, paradise?

He heard the same Jesus speak. He mocked him, but he turned his back on him. Where was he going to be in a lost eternity?

Oh, God forbid that any one of us should come under the gospel of Jesus Christ and refuse to yield and accept that only message of hope for time and for eternity.

In Matthew's gospel, there is an account there, is there not, of the disciples when they were in a boat. And this really covers all of us who are professing faith in the Lord Jesus.

[16 : 27] In that occasion, you remember, they were afraid and Jesus was there in the boat asleep. Their immediate reaction was, and it can often be the church's reaction, your reaction and mine, if things are not going well for us, we can find ourselves saying, do you not care for us?

Do you not care that we are perishing? This world that we are living, the elements of this world, maybe even the elements that they would say God had created, they're about to overthrow us.

And here is Jesus asleep and they're crying out to him, do you not care that we are perishing here? The audacity of a believer to doubt the Lord Jesus Christ and his faithfulness to his people.

But we do it all the time. We don't always take him at his word. Or they had to learn their lesson.

These men had to realize that what they had said could have been an offense to the Lord Jesus. for you of little faith. Jesus stood up, you remember, and he rebuked the wind and the sea and everything became calm.

[17 : 58] Everything was fine. Everything was fine in the boat. No life was lost. No endangerment at all. And they had to accept.

What kind of man is this? That even the wind and the sea obey him. What kind of Savior do you have? How do you assess your awareness of the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we find ourselves looking upon him, depending upon our own particular welfare? Do we think of him as some weakling?

That's what the disciples seemed to suggest, or at the very least, they were thinking that he wasn't concerned about them. However, this Jesus, as far as these disciples were concerned, he had much more care of them than they were giving him credit for.

But they did recognize in the very act of Jesus, that witness and that testimony to them, yes, Jesus can still the storm.

[19 : 18] Not just the storm of the natural world, but the storm that arises in your heart and mine. Remember the Pharisees on one occasion, occasion.

In Luke's gospel, chapter 15, and not just one occasion, they were constantly snarling at him. And in chapter 15 of Luke's gospel, in verse 2, they come out with this amazing statement, which is certainly not a statement of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet the statement that they make is one that is so true.

they said, the Pharisees said, this man, he receives sinners. Not only that, but he eats with them. What kind of man is this? The Pharisees would say. Does he not understand? Is he no understanding? That's what they would say concerning God and the law.

Well, how many people there are, I wonder. Even within the parameters of the church, I'm not talking here just about those who are believers, but I'm thinking really of those people who sit on the sideline, and who have an accusation against the Lord Jesus Christ because of the way that he does things.

[20 : 49] Maybe sometimes people in this world have this idea, you may have a church mind, you may have a desire for some things, but then you think to yourself, your life is not as good as some of these other people who make a profession of faith, and you have a complication about that.

You have a jealousy. These Pharisees, boy, they were jealous. To the back teeth they were jealous. They hated him so much.

And the very fact that they would even say that he eats with publicans and sinners belies, does it not, any reality of truth within them.

On another occasion, these self-same Pharisees, they had sent, you remember, two soldiers to go. We find this in John's Gospel.

they sent two soldiers to take Jesus back into captivity so that they could talk with him and question him even more. Up until that point in time, of course, all they were doing was listening to the gossip.

[22 : 01] Sometimes there would be witnesses of some of the things he was doing, but most of the time, they had their lackeys who were reporting back every incident of Jesus' life and what he was doing with the people and how popular he was coming and they didn't like it.

So take them back. That's what they said. Take them back. That's what they said. Did they? No, they didn't. I think it's amazing that these two men, again with no profession as such, and yet of the influence of the Lord Jesus Christ had an effect upon them.

Again, I'm not trying to suggest that in the incident, that is recorded for us in John 7, that they were converted, but they're certainly very close to it. They had disobeyed the Pharisees.

They didn't take Jesus back. They had the power and they had the authority to do it, but they didn't. What were they afraid of? Why did they not take Jesus back? Were they afraid of the mob?

No, that was not the problem. They weren't afraid of the crowd. In fact, the crowd would be afraid of them, I think. The real problem was for these men, that they never ever heard a man speak like this man.

[23 : 25] They never heard it. They never heard anyone speak like Jesus. else. And you know, I'm sure something is ringing in your ears.

Those of you who have faith in Jesus, you're understanding exactly what I'm saying. There is no one that has ever spoken to you. No matter how eloquent a preacher you might have, and he's a good preacher, it doesn't matter.

it's when Jesus speaks, that's what makes the difference, and you can hear the voice of Jesus speaking. Imagine the consternation of the Pharisees, when they came back and they said, no one spoke like them.

The Pharisees thought, don't look at us. Are we not good at auditory skill? Are we not good at seeking the attention of the crowds?

We can speak out, we can speak anywhere we like. People will listen to us. Well, I think these soldiers were telling them, no one really is listening to you, because this man, according to them, this man speaks differently altogether.

[24 : 45] And I want to pause in this one just for a moment or two, because it's a challenge to us all. Again, I don't want to make any impression that I'm saying these two men were converted, but there's no doubt that the influence of Jesus and the words of Jesus was great upon them.

For all of us who come under the sound of the gospel, that's what we want. That people will hear the voice of Jesus speaking through his word. Never mind the vehicle that we might be as preachers of the gospel.

What is important is it's the word of Jesus. And even more than that, and this is a lesson to you and to me. Because you and I, we are called upon by Jesus to be witnesses and to bear testimony, to tell this world that there is a Savior, that there is one who can seek and save that which is lost.

There is one who is, yes, truly the Son of God. There is one who has done no wrong whatsoever. there is one who speaks succinctly and clearly and directly.

He doesn't have to turn up the volume in order for people to hear him. He can unblock the ears of any man, woman, or child.

[26 : 11] He can make you and I listen to his word and to his testimony. He can tell you and I where the problem is for each and every one of us.

You know, I have often thought to myself, even as a preacher, of course it's important what we say. We are accountable as preachers of the gospel to speak the truth, but we must speak it in love as well.

But sometimes I think we can say everything that is right. All the T's scored and all the I's dotted. Everything is right in what we are saying theologically. I'm not suggesting mine is always right, but theologically we might want to think, yes, everything is right.

But something's wrong. What's wrong? Very often it can be the voice that's wrong. It's not what we say maybe.

[27 : 17] It's a way that we say it. We can offend people. We can, as it were, cause people to shut their ears because maybe we like to speak in a self-righteous manner, in a different plane, above others, almost like the Pharisees themselves.

This man says these men. No one has spoken like him. They've never heard it on this manner before. And that's true for every one of you here this morning that's sitting at the table.

You have never heard anything that is more important to you than what came out of the lips of Christ, that touched your heart and your soul, that delivered you from the bondage and the corruption of sin.

This man, Jesus, what do you think of him? What does he mean to you as you sit here at the table? What does he mean to any one of us? Is he just a figure in the calendar of the local church?

What does he mean to any one of us? if he is not the son of God, the savior of the world, then you better watch. A day is coming when he will call upon you and you will be called to give an account.

[28 : 50] And if you are not trusting in him, woe be tied. When we speak of this man, we speak of a man who is perfect in every way.

His message and his testimony is so pure. His love is so great. After all, as the apostle says, who can separate us from the love of Christ?

Tribulation, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long.

We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But nay, in all of these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Have you got the persuasion of the apostle Paul?

I hope so. I'm sure that's why you're here today. Why you're going to remember what Jesus has done for you in a particular way in the sacrament.

[30 : 00] This man, perfect, this man, righteous, this man, holy, this man, the Son of God, this man, this sacrifice for sin.

Shall we pray? faith■ 23, and this add or what are we