

# Sunday 19th January 2025 - Know My Name: Jesus Christ

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Preacher: Matt Wallace

[ 0 : 00 ] We're continuing this series that we started last week called Know My Name. It's a series in which we're exploring the significance of names. Names of God, names of people and places in the Bible, and names we might have for ourselves in life as well.

And as we've seen this morning, we're baptizing David and Archer. Names, they're key. Indeed, they're one of the key ways in which we're known within a family or a community. They help to give us our identity, our place, if you like, in relation to one another.

Now, we'll explore the importance of people's names and so on as we go through the weeks of this series. But having started last week when we looked at a couple of sort of ancient ways in which God is named in the Bible, and if you weren't here, feel free to catch up with that on YouTube this week if you wish.

Having looked at that last week, though, it seems to make sense to maybe continue that divine theme by looking today at the name and person of Jesus, the one who we would say is God with us in human form.

And yet working out the significance of the name Jesus, it's not always easy, partly because there are so many other ways in which Jesus is known or described, you know, other titles, perhaps, alongside his name.

[ 1 : 30 ] So he's also known as Christ or Messiah, Lord, Savior, Emmanuel, as Rabbi or Teacher, Son of God, Son of Man, Son of Joseph, Mary's Son, King of the Jews, the Word, the Great High Priest, Prince of Peace, Redeemer, the Good Shepherd, King of Kings, Lamb of God, and so on and so on.

We could go on all sorts of titles or descriptors or alternative identifiers for the one who we know, perhaps best of all, as Jesus.

I mean, on the one hand, with all that in mind, no wonder, I think, this whole church and faith stuff can be so confusing for people because whole libraries couldn't fill the books that have been written by people trying to get their heads around what all these different terms for Jesus mean.

And on the other hand, it's perhaps not surprising that Jesus is known and described in so many ways because he was, I'd say he is, the most mesmerizing, remarkable presence who we could ever possibly encounter.

So how do we approach these titles? And perhaps most of all, the name of Jesus. Well, I guess what helps is making that distinction, if you like, in that whilst Jesus is his name, so many of the other words are just listed.

[ 3 : 00 ] They could be described not as names, but as titles. Indeed, the most famous of these titles is probably this one, Christ, Christ.

Although we'd be forgiven for thinking this was Jesus' surname because he's often called Jesus Christ. You know, it sounds like a full name, perhaps, to us. And yet, indulge me for a moment if you already know this, but the word Christ is the English translation of the Greek word Christos, which means anointed one.

And this Greek word Christos is itself a translation of the Hebrew word Mashiach, which we pronounce in English as Messiah, which also means anointed one.

So Jesus Christ really means Jesus' anointed one. You know, it's a title, which is why, perhaps, in the Bible, Jesus Christ is sometimes reversed as Christ Jesus.

Same words, just different way round. So Christ Jesus means anointed one, Jesus. Christ as a title, it works, perhaps, either way round.

[ 4 : 17 ] Why is Jesus given this anointed one title in the first place? Well, it's all connected with the ancient practice of people being anointed with oil as a way of setting them apart for a special purpose from God.

You know, most usually in ancient times, as we saw with Charles' coronation the other month, you know, the special purpose of being a king or royalty involved that anointing with oil on their head. And so, in calling Jesus Christ or Messiah, you know, anointed one, it's basically a way of calling Jesus king. Hence, these other titles, perhaps, of ways of describing Jesus, calling him, say, king of the Jews, or sometimes he's known as son of David.

David being the most famous king of all of Israel. So Jesus is a descendant of David. He takes on that kind of kingly identity and that family line. Except rather than being like an earthly king of wealth and status and privilege, Jesus would come as a completely different kind of king with a completely different kind of kingdom, kingdom of God as we know it, which was instead and is instead all about not status and privilege and wealth, but humility and service and generosity.

Now, this idea of a heavenly kingdom here on earth might say a cosmic Christ in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Well, ever since the birth of Jesus, people have attempted to process the idea that Jesus came both as fully God and fully human, cosmic and down to earth, all at the same time.

[ 6 : 12 ] Indeed, that's the beauty and the wonder of what we call the incarnation, that somehow in this walking, talking person of Jesus, born as a baby, a little bit smaller than Archer is now.

Somehow in that baby and the man he grew a bee, we see in Jesus, one who is at one and the same time, both human and divine.

Now, us, well, me, finite mind and all that kind of stuff, I was trying to get our heads around that. That's a big concept, big topic for people to try and understand. And so you get attempts like this one over the years, an early attempt.

Indeed, this is one of the earliest known icons or images that we have of Jesus. This dates, people reckon, from the 6th century. It's a famous icon, which is in St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt.

And you might have seen it before. It's a very famous image, not least because the original artist or artists tried to convey both the human and the divine nature of Jesus in this one face.

[ 7 : 33 ] Indeed, if you look carefully, you'll see that the left-hand side is reckoned to represent the divine nature of Jesus, while the right-hand side perhaps conveys more of the human nature of Jesus.

It's clearer, for example, if we just split the face in two. And if we were to put a mirror image, perhaps, of each side next to each other, you'll hopefully see what this means.

So if you mirror, say, the left-hand side, it looks like that image of Jesus there, which looks pretty serene, almost a kind of angelic, very pure face, a divine face, we might say, brighter in complexion and expression.

That's that one, that side. But if we compare that with the other side, a mirror image, the right-hand side of Jesus' face in this picture, we get that image. Slightly more weathered, should we say.

We might say more worldly face, darker in complexion, maybe a bit darker in expression as well.

And so these two sides, representing for the artist, the divine and the human, they're very cleverly merged into one depiction of Jesus as fully human, fully God.

[ 9 : 01 ] Now keep them separate. Make them into two pictures. And there's a risk of what we might call a very dualistic, you know, one, not the other, kind of understanding of Jesus.

But remember, this is the 6th century. Put them together. It's very clever. Because you can see, perhaps, the whole truth that the artist is trying to convey in this one face of Jesus.

And yet my hunch is, generally, I think, that the further we become separated from the time of Jesus, which was, you know, 2,000 years ago now, the more historical, should we say, that Jesus and the Gospels become.

Well, I wonder if there's a risk that our faith and the way we relate to God might focus more easily on the cosmic Christ identity than on the very human, down-to-earth, Jesus, walking, talking identity.

Ideally, it's both and, you know, the earthly and the heavenly, the cosmic and the grounded. But since we know his name, his name of Jesus, I'd suggest that that offers us the opportunity to know God on a deeply, profoundly, personal level that may not quite be the case if we were to simply know him by a title, you know, even a title as precious and as significant as Christ.

[10:40] See, the writer of one of the letters in the New Testament, Philippians, he says this, he says that Jesus, well, that is the name that is above every name, which seems to me to suggest that we do well to use it in the way we relate to God at every opportunity possible.

Why? Well, because in using the name of Jesus, we're connecting to and being reminded of the one who lived among us in order to show us not only how to live, but to reveal to us in person the character, we might even say the face of God.

Indeed, I know for me, some of my favorite gospel stories are the ones where the sheer humanity of Jesus shines through because they're the times when I read those stories or watch those stories and I think, that's Jesus.

Okay. Do you know what? I wonder, with God's help, I think I might be able to do or be just a little bit like Jesus is in that particular story.

You know, not in a kind of cocky way, but more as a kind of first steps. You know, what would Jesus do? I did that. I can relate to that and I can maybe put that into practice in my life.

[12:04] Maybe we can put that into practice in our lives. So we're going to look at three little stories today, three examples of the humanity, if you like, of Jesus shining through.

So first up, there's this little passage from the first chapter of John's gospel where John the Baptist, who was only recently baptized to Jesus, he sees Jesus and he points Jesus out to his own followers and this is how the next bit plays out.

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, Look, the Lamb of God. When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, What do you want? They said, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying? Come, he replied, and you will see.

So they went and saw where he was staying and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. Now, short and sharp reading that one.

[13:24] But the reason I like it is that in between these titles for Jesus that are used in that little passage there, for example, he's called Lamb of God. John the Baptist calls him that.

The others call him Rabbi or Teacher. Again, these two followers who come to him, they're both titles, Lamb of God and Rabbi, Teacher. In the midst of those titles, it's Jesus.

He just seems so relatable and, dare I say it, normal in this sort of exchange. So these two blokes that are following him, Jesus turns round, sees them following him and says, What do you want?

They ask, Where are you staying? Jesus says, Come and see and he has them round. He has them come and stay. Where are he staying? He has them round to his place.

It's that simple a kind of story. Who are you? Where are you staying? Come and see. Come with me. And they go there. It's not sort of a big and deep and meaningful in some ways, it seems.

[14:23] I kind of imagine almost Jesus walking into the place where he's staying with these other two guys who followed him in a kind of very domesticated way. Sort of almost saying, Come on in, make yourselves at home plumping up the cushions or whatever for him, making him a drink and so on.

I mean, in the last little bit of that passage, we're even told this seemingly random little detail when it finishes by saying, It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. Why does that matter?

Why do we care what time it was that they went round Jesus' house? Well, maybe it matters because maybe that's tea time. Maybe that's the time that they're coming for a cuppa, a bit of afternoon tea, with Jesus.

Who knows? That might be part of the cultural thing going on there. What's more though, I think, all this seems to be happening, and this is perhaps the most important bit, just a couple of days into Jesus' public ministry.

But straight away, he's not necessarily doing all the spectacular stuff straight away. rather, he's prioritizing hospitality and conversation and friendships.

[15:31] I love that. I love that. That's one of the first things Jesus does. And I love that because not only does it encourage me to think that Jesus might want to spend time with me in the same way he does with these guys, spend time with you in the same way he does with these guys.

But it's also something that we can copy. We can emulate that attitude. We can offer hospitality. We can make someone a drink. We can plump up the cushions when someone comes round.

Because in doing so, well, we're following Jesus. We're following the example and the person of Jesus. It's easy.

It's easy. Simple. Yes, discipleship and following Jesus no doubt involves more than that. But at the very least, indeed, perhaps as a first priority, following Jesus' example means welcoming people in and showing them kindness and love.

It's the first example of this very human Jesus. Well, then how about another one? This one again, it references John the Baptist as sometimes later Jesus is being criticised by some religious leaders for the priority he makes of eating and drinking with people.

[16:52] So in Luke chapter 7, we're told that Jesus says this. He says, John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine and you say he has a demon.

Son of man came eating and drinking and you say here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. but wisdom is proved right by all her children.

Now once again in this little passage here, we'll leave it up on the screens for us. There's a title for Jesus which is thrown into the mix. This time Jesus himself, he calls himself the son of man and I think this is interesting because whenever Jesus spoke about himself, he often called himself not Christ or Messiah or son of God but instead he tends to describe himself as the son of man and there are probably various reasons for this but it seems to me one of the main ones is that Jesus was constantly trying to emphasize his humanity as much as his divinity almost as if to say, yeah, I am God.

You know, I call God Father and I am his son but I'm also fully human with earthly parents. I am a son of man. You know, someone who you can relate to as one of your own.

Indeed, if this is true, I think it ties in with what's going on in this passage here because it seems that these religious leaders have criticized John the Baptist despite the fact that he lived a life of denial.

[18:33] He was famously teetotal and to then criticize Jesus because he seemed to be the exact opposite. Jesus seemed to like to eat and drink and indeed for Jesus to be accused of being a glutton and a drunkard.

In some ways there's no smoke without fire. It certainly implies at the least that Jesus was probably one of the first to get around him, one of the first to suggest, shall we get a takeaway? You're not called a glutton and a drunkard lightly.

I'm sure Jesus ate and drank with the best of them. Not getting drunk but eating and drinking with people in that very social way. And again, I love this.

I love this. Because in saying at the end there that wisdom is proved right by all her children, now here Jesus seems to be suggesting to these people, these people critiquing him and John the Baptist, saying to them in effect, you know, look, by all means debate religion and theology.

But the bottom line is, are people's lives being transformed? Are they learning how much God loves them despite the fact that you want to call them first and foremost sinners?

[19:45] Because if they are, and I think the proof is in the pudding, then back off, says Jesus effectively. Let me get on with showing people what it means to live life God's way.

You know, for me, and for us perhaps as a church, I take this passage to heart here. Because we may not always get everything right, theologically or socially.

And some may criticize the heartfelt views that I, or we, genuinely hold. And they're entitled to do that. But as we look around, as people walk through these doors here, the bottom line is do they feel welcomed?

Do they feel loved? And are they growing in faith? You know, I sincerely hope so. And from what David was saying this morning in particular, perhaps that's proof that that's happening.

You know, the way in which the wisdom of loving acceptance of people is proved right by her children, perhaps, as Jesus might say. And so if that sense of acceptance and love is expressed perhaps through the way we eat and drink together, perhaps through the way we do life with each other, whether that's pub club, curry club, drop-in, little friends, F&F, the Christmas lunch, play in the park, all these food and drink based activities, then I would suggest it's a pretty relatable, practical way in which all of us can follow Jesus and become just a little bit more like him.

[21:29] That's the second example. But then thirdly, finally, how about this one from Mark's gospel, chapter 10? When even Jesus' own disciples seem to resent the fact that Jesus is this all-inclusive, so approachable kind of guy.

So look at this one from Mark 10, verses 13 to 16. People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on, but the disciples rebuked them.

When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Truly, I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them, and blessed them.

I love that story. I love that little story. There's this cosmic Christ, made flesh, who gathers children in his arms and basically gives them a hug.

[ 22 : 42 ] It's a hug of godly humanity. It's a blessing of care and love that demonstrates the way in which Jesus relates to all ages. And again, that's something each of us can offer through hugs, if that's appropriate, if we know the kids are all invited.

But more widely, that can happen through the acceptance, the generosity, the love we show to younger ones in our community because it's in this way, in the welcome and the embrace of children in whatever manner that means, that we're following the lead and example, I'd say, of Jesus himself.

And so on and so on. There'll be other stories just like this, emphasizing the human touch, if you like, of Jesus. Indeed, I'd say it's precisely because of this very personal, relatable example of Jesus.

Because we know him by name, that we're more able to put verses like this one into practice when we're told, Colossians 3.17, whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

We'll look more at the name of Jesus and what it means next week. But for me, I think I'd say there is power in the name of Jesus precisely because it's so personal.

[ 24 : 16 ] Of course, it's not that there isn't immense, eternal importance in knowing and worshipping a Jesus, the God who is the Christ, the Messiah, who is the King of Kings.

That worshipping aspect of our faith, that's crucial for our ability to encounter the fullness of God that we see in Jesus Christ and we'll be doing just that in song in a bit.

But for me, and I think this is my main point today, acknowledging and reflecting on the humanity of Jesus, that can only serve to enrich our worship as it brings the wonder of Jesus being fully human and fully God into sharper, more awe-inspiring focus.

Indeed, as we get into this series on the importance of names, I guess I just want to close by emphasizing what an amazing privilege it is in being able to know and say the name of Jesus, to relate to him by name as our friend, as well as, quite rightly, as our saviour and our king.

And what's more, this same Jesus, the one whose name we know, he also knows us. He knows you and me by name.

[ 25 : 48 ] That privilege, that knowledge, that should give us immense encouragement because we are called to know Jesus in the same way that he knows us in this two-way, self-giving, covenantal friendship.

friendship. Indeed, it's through that friendship that we can learn slowly but surely and through the power of the spirit of Jesus living in us what it truly means to follow his example in the way we love others and ultimately love God.

Amen. Amen.