

Three Words

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[0 : 00] Getting right down to it at 9.05. Good to see you this morning. What follows are three very, I have to emphasize, very general, somewhat theological, I hesitate to call them this, but three word studies.

That's pretentious because of their generality and they're a bit swashbuckling, but I hope nevertheless of value. Three words.

The words are, as in front of us here, are Lord, we're going to look at, we're going to look at another word, you've heard it before, Jesus, and then finally we'll look at a third word, which you have heard before as well, the word Christ.

Lord, then Jesus, then Christ. Words, of course, central to the New Testament, central to our faith, to the church.

We use them all the time. At the 7.30 service this morning, I tried to keep an eye out for them. We use them as we receive the elements. We sing these words.

[1 : 10] They're in the Bible everywhere. They're in the theological heritage of the church. Three words. Man, we take them for granted after a while. Lord, Jesus, Christ.

Sometimes in different order. They, of course, go together. They live together on the pages of the New Testament, sometimes in different order, sometimes a little bit separated, but they're, and frequently just plain old-fashioned joined together.

But each alone, I hope we will see together this morning, are, and I'm speaking, preaching to the choir, are rich in meaning, each of these words.

It was only when I completed this rather inadequate presentation, just, it was it Friday, that I realized that each of these words is used as a swear word.

You've undoubtedly come across them in your, where you work, where you play, alas, in the media, on television, in the movies. These three words are frequently just swear words now.

[2 : 13] Lord, Jesus, and Christ. The significance of that little epiphany I had escapes me. You can figure out what that means. But I state this simply for the record.

That is to say, they share a broad usage, perhaps broader than we realize. Better, of course, the opposite of their use in swearing.

They're used in prayer, aren't they? So, let us begin using them this morning as we get going, using these three words in prayer.

Again, before we unpack them and we pray for the benefit of our minds and hearts. So, let's pray. Our God, we come together in this place to know you better.

We thank you for giving us our Lord Jesus Christ. That we may know you as we should.

[3 : 18] You have given us our Lord Jesus Christ. So, bless us this day and bless us always. And, of course, our Father God, we pray this prayer in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. It's a gloomy day today in Vancouver. I was talking to my friend over here about the weather.

So, maybe it's appropriate for me to start with, maybe matching the season, to start with a bit of a gloomy announcement. But, as most of you know, we are in the last season, the last stretch of Downton Abbey.

There it is. For some, this is quite sad, I know. For others, maybe this is good news. I don't know. You're tired of hearing about that TV show, which I never watch.

But, you'll agree, it's quite a phenomenon, as they say, Downton Abbey. A portrayal, of course, as we all know, of another world, another time.

[4 : 35] Folks who look like us, sort of, they speak our language, if English is your first language. And yet, everything is quite, quite different, you will recall, if you've seen that show.

Expected courtesies characterize this world. And that, because in that world, point out the obvious, rank and position and inheritance are crucially defining.

Always, recognition of order is called for in the Downton Abbey world. A recognition which reinforces the order, of course.

Courtesy. The curtsy itself. Mean much. Quite a world, Downton Abbey. When I was a boy, like some of you here today, I'm sure, I dreamed, I put my little boy heart on display here, I dreamed of hockey superstar status.

And tonight's first star, Harvey, I remember dreaming. They didn't even have to mention my last name. The great one. There it was.

[5 : 45] Never, never, never, never, as I recall, did I announce to anyone, Mom, when I grow up, I want to be Head Butler. You know, that's the job I'm after.

Alas, the world is the world. And there is, you find this out as you grow up, there is an upstairs and there is a downstairs, always in this world.

The world is the world that seems to never change. And at the top of the heights of the Downton Abbey world, there is the famous Earl, as you recall that show, Lord Grantham.

What a fellow. A man who knows adversity and challenge, but has managed his way through it all, as you know, who, those of you who watch this show, with some help, he's got through life from a well-to-do wife and his very interesting daughters.

Quite a world, the Downton Abbey world. There would appear to be not much at all in common between this Downton world and the world of the New Testament.

[6 : 52] Edwardian gentlemen and Pharisees. What would they have in common? Well, maybe a bit. We won't explore that today.

Ever so different, these worlds. It's amazing that in this one world in which we live, there are so many different worlds. We take that for granted.

But at least they share one thing. Both worlds use and take seriously a word like, a word like, you know what's coming, a word like, Lord.

A Lord lives in the Downton Abbey world very significantly. Lord Grantham.

We this morning in this place talk about, sing about, have in our liturgies, have in our pondering of the gospel, have in the scriptures, another Lord, the Lord Jesus.

[7 : 56] Lord. Lord. Lord. Lord. It's a very significant word in the New Testament world. It's much less a significant word in our world.

Sort of half, mostly disappeared. Lord Grantham. Or Lord Jesus. In Paul's letters, won't do too much of this kind of thing today.

I find it grows tedious pretty quickly. But it is interesting to note that in Paul's letters, the word Lord appears well over 200 times. Something like 230, I think it is, in that range.

Paul's letters, the word Lord is there all the time. Lord. A crucial word, almost certainly, in Paul's whole mindset. It has been well said by our absent friend Jim Packer, and I'm sure he's said it at Learner's Exchange on occasion, that when it comes to the New Testament, we don't count words. Rather, we weigh them, which is a very wise thing for Jim to remind us of. But, I'm sure he would agree, 200 uses and more speaks for itself.

[9 : 08] Lord does appear. Surely it is a weighty word. Indeed, it is a weighty word for sure for the apostle.

He says over and over and over again in his writings, and other authors in the New Testament do it as well, of course.

Paul uses, and they all use, and Paul the most, this word. Lord. Therefore, surely for lovers of the Bible, I take it you are that, for lovers of the New Testament, here is a word well worth pondering. Slowing down, if you will, and just looking at a word. Forgive another mention of Downton, but just to point out again, something very often. When I hear that word, Downton, in a very real sense, it, the word, you'll agree with me, you know exactly what I mean.

It goes off in the mind. It lives in, Jim likes to say this too, it's the kind of thing that scholars say, words all live in a semantic field.

[10 : 18] Isn't that pretentious? Because words don't just sit idly on a page, they kind of dazzle with implied references.

A whole history is in a word. Downton. I say that word, and well, that structure of a building. I can see it right away. Downton. Maybe that's what happens. Or those grounds around the building.

Or stately rooms in the building. Glittering formal attire. An efficiency of service in the downstairs part of this big building.

There's order implied by the word Downton. Also intrigue when you think of the stories associated with that fictional building. So much is in a word.

Words, especially crucial words, are like that, aren't they? It's interesting, it's good to remember the obvious again. Words, they carry worlds inside of them.

[11:18] They mean much. Especially words which are discerned to be crucial. So, well, what about the word Lord? What is the world that goes off again, if I can use that phrase, in Paul's mind, when he says, or other New Testament writers, I'm just using Paul for the convenience here really.

But what goes off in his mind? What semantic field is there when he prays that word Lord? When he writes it?

When he sings it? There are places in the New Testament where Paul is evidently singing things.

And the word Lord is in the song, in the hymn. So, to know again, a little more, just something a little more at this point, in the mind of the apostle in this case, increases, will increase, I hope, our comprehension of his letters and of the New Testament.

And finally, of course, our knowledge of Jesus will be furthered. Because, of course, in Paul's mind, in the mind of the New Testament writers, Jesus is Paul's Lord.

What does he mean by Lord? Just a little footnote here. The trouble with a word like Lord, if trouble there is, is simply that its meaning seems, I think we can say this safely, it seems kind of obvious.

[12:52] That's why maybe we don't stop and say, now what's going on with a word like Lord? Its meaning seems obvious. And in some measure, I think that is probably true in a case like Lord.

But here, remember the warning of our good old friend C.S. Lewis, the fifth evangelist, I think he's going to be called soon. When reading old literature, this is a great thing that Lewis writes about, when reading old literature, it is the words, the obvious ones, with their meaning on the surface, as Lewis says, which may indeed mislead us.

We've got to remember that, because meaning shifts across time. Meanings shift. Words don't just remain meaning what they originally meant, or what their form, that you can look up in a dictionary, will tell you.

Words shift around in their meaning, and it's really slippery when you say, oh, there's a word, I'm used to that word, I know what it means, when in fact the author may live in a world where that word means something quite significantly different.

Words mean, said the great philosopher Wittgenstein, a very simple assertion, but it's very profound, it seems to me, words mean, he said, how they are used.

[14:15] Words mean how they are used. Words are a kind of story. It really is the case. They live in narratives. They live in different historical moments.

They live in controversy. And in all of these different shifting times and controversies, they shift their meaning around. So, Lord, just to be simple and straight to the point here about a word like Lord, here follows a somewhat, and this is just so tentative, I know, you'll know it's tentative as I speak about it.

Here follows a rather blunt, if you'll allow the word, existential reading of the word Lord, emphasizing here more the feeling in Paul to the extent that we can maybe reconstruct that rather than its, quote, ontological meaning, although they will overlap.

But here, just an attempt at getting at, again, as scholars can best discern it, what happens in that mind of a human being in the first century like Paul, a sophisticate like Paul, when he says, right, sings the word Lord.

How does this word feel for Paul? How does it live for him? And of course, again, this is open to much revision in the conversation time.

[15:41] I hope we can share more about this kind of thing. Again, going right to the super obvious, but again, you have to do this when you zero in on a word.

Paul, almost always, when he says Lord, not always, always, but almost always, when he says Lord, means, again, this is so obvious, but again, I love noting the obvious, Paul means, when he says Lord, he means Jesus as divine presence.

When Paul says Lord, he means Jesus, the divine presence that he never is away from. Jesus, the divine presence.

Therefore, this divine presence, again, I try to think of Paul feeling these things, maybe when he was alone, when he was lonely, when he was at prayer.

Therefore, this divine presence possesses invincible authority over me. Why invincible? Well, why unchallengeable?

[16:54] Because divine means something unthinkable, just simply beyond all of our comprehension. It's intelligible in its incomprehensibility, if you will.

Divine means uncreated. Jesus, the divine presence, always has been, always will be. He is eternal.

He possesses perfect knowledge of me as I think of him, and he therefore has perfect authority over me. Jesus, the Lord, the divine presence.

Paul would not say that idly. He would think and feel it at the same time. To question, therefore, divine command or divine promise in principle indicates moral and intellectual, is it too strong a word?

Depravity, really. Or a mind on the way to that. This presence, again, I try to, Paul feels this as he says, Lord, this presence is the giver of your existence.

[18:11] You exist right now because this divine presence wills you to exist. It will, this presence, give you at your end, we can call it this as Christians, the divine presence will give you the gift of your death.

death. He decides when you will die. He gives you your existence, your beginning, he gives you your death. And this divine presence, Paul felt this surely, it comes through in his letters, this divine presence sustains a long life's way.

This divine presence bears care for you. Paul would put it obviously in the first person, bears care for me. Therefore, again, in principle, care or anxiety for yourself in any form is a form of spiritual and moral failure.

He bears all the care for your existence. You are to bear none of it. And closely related to that, therefore, this would be very real in Paul's mind, you feel it in his letters for sure, to be a slave, to be a servant.

Of this divine presence is one's highest dignity and honor. Paul would be a very self-confident man, it's been said. I think he was.

[19:35] I'm a servant of Jesus, the Lord, the divine presence in which we all live. This is the highest honor a human being can know.

This Lord is the Lord of all lesser authorities. authorities. And they possess authority, these lesser authorities, as from him.

And that is, it seems to me, a most wondrous truth when one comes to grips with what the word Lord means. There are many lords in the world.

Family, the state, the Bible for the Christian. They are lesser authorities, under the sovereign divine authority of Jesus.

Lord, you see, for Paul is both intelligible and it authors, this Lord, all that is intelligible.

[20:38] He is the infinite mystery of divinity itself. Lord, Lord. Something like that is what goes off, if you will, will, in Paul's mind, when he says, Lord.

I don't know how many times already today I've said it. I tried to look at them as I was at the 730s as we read the Bible, as we said the prayers, as we went through the liturgy, in the hymn, in the sermon.

Lord. It goes all over and over and over again. We say this word, Lord, Lord, Lord. We say it all the time. To be more and more, it seems to me, aware of what's going on there when I say that, when we together say that word, is of great benefit.

What's going on with a word like Lord? Wouldn't it be shameful if I went through my life as a Christian, for instance, I mean this quite seriously, and really it never got much beyond the way one of the servants in the basement at Downton says, Lord, grant them.

That would be horrible. Our Lord is not Lord Grantham. He's not one of the lesser lords that the world is sprinkled through with. He is the divine Lord.

[21:59] Briefly, very briefly, I know that was, but I hope in the conversation time we can unfold that more and more in conversation. There is our first word, Lord. I want to keep moving right along.

The second word is, of course, Jesus. A word that, again, we use so, so much as Christian people. And it is deeply connected, of course, with Lord.

One could argue, I would argue as just a barefaced truth about everything, that this connection of Lord and Jesus, Lord, Jesus, is perhaps, am I overstating this?

I don't think I am. It is the most revolutionary thing that has ever happened in the world. When you really just stop and think of it. Paul came to think of that word, Lord, in some way beyond what I've been able to say, and he connected it with Jesus, Lord, that divine presence, who authors your existence, who gives you the gift of death, who bears your care along life's way, who gives you everything, and it's the highest honor to serve him.

Paul brought together Lord with Jesus, Lord Jesus. It is the most revolutionary thing that has ever happened. It has so far transformed the world in many ways, largely hidden from us.

[23 : 39] to put it in a straightforward way, to understand Lord as somehow connected or defined by Jesus is, I think, the chief difficulty of the Christian life, really.

It creates the never-ending paradoxes and transformation that the Christian mystery has introduced into the world.

world. This, again, set of two words, Lord Jesus, has, by their being put together, has transformed the meaning of many, many words in our language.

They've been a powerful influence shaping what other words meant in the past. They have a kind of judging power. I have felt, again, the strangeness of Lord Jesus in reading, with apologies to some people, but here I go again, as some people will say about me.

I felt the strangeness of Lord Jesus in reading Marilyn Robinson's essay in her recent book of essays, Son of Adam, Son of Man, the name of one of her essays in that book, Son of Adam, Son of Man.

[25 : 00] Again, a magnificent contribution to her recent book of essays. Novelists notice things. That's part of their business, I suppose. Artists notice things.

That's part of their business. That's why we pay attention to them. When the novelist is a genius, as I'm sure this woman is, the noting becomes, it seems to me, just remarkable.

Paul, as we said earlier, does sing about the Lord Jesus, never so profoundly does he sing about Jesus, than in Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 through 11.

You know that passage. Though he was in the form of God, he speaks about Jesus, Paul, of course, as you know. Though he was in the form of God, yet he did not hold on to this equality with God, but he emptied himself and took the form of a servant, and being found in human form, he became a servant unto death, even death on a cross.

You know that whole passage, Paul continues. We know, yes, we do know this passage. It's a song, almost for sure, that the earliest, earliest Christians sang, and Paul is quoting.

[26 : 17] Outside chance, Paul wrote it himself. This passage in Philippians is a song, almost for sure, that the earliest, earliest Christians sang about Jesus. Just think about it.

But Christians remembered Jesus, apparently, for sure, in another kind of register, in another key, if you will. In this regard, this novelist artist, Marilyn Robinson, thinks about, for instance, Matthew and Luke, and thinks about the fact that in Matthew and Luke, they record genealogies about this Jesus. This is remarkable. see the oddness, if you will, of early Christian remembering about this Jesus. He who was in the form of God, they sing together. Just think about that. He who was in the form of God.

He had a genealogy, the gospel writers remember. Now, there is something to note. I've never noted that, or just put those two simple ideas together.

[27 : 36] When did one who was in the form of God have a genealogy? How do you put that together? Here is a very strange Lord Jesus for sure.

Were these genealogies, as they are recorded again by Matthew and Luke, were they remembered, the novelist asked herself, with a degree of irony?

Perhaps they were. They remembered that the one who was in the form of God, who emptied himself of his godness, if you will, took the form of a servant.

He had a genealogy. He came from a human line, as the earliest again Christians will remember him. The church, of course, fully noted this wild nature of these New Testament assertions about Jesus and decided, if you will, not to change a word of what they were looking at, but to summarize it all by saying, well, in the case of one famous document, just, we'll summarize it all in four words. And so, very often when you come to church, the church tells us to say this, very God, very man. Got it? There it is, it's all solved.

[29 : 00] You know, that's, that's, the chief sign for me that Nicaea is a faithful witness. Now, it's been said, the creeds were written as a guide to Bible reading.

So, you read the Bible and you come across Philippians 2, 5 to 11, and he who was in the form of God, okay, we're worshipping Jesus as God. And then you turn over another page, you come to Luke or Matthew and you're reading about his genealogy.

Well, you see, that's because he's very man, but he's also very God. And so, we say it in the creed. There you go. Nice to come to Learner's Exchange and get this all straightened out.

And it makes matters a bit worse, I suppose, with some irony, when we are reminded that, as we are by many people, that Jesus was a very, very common name among the Jews of first century Palestine.

There were Jesuses all over the place amongst the Jews. This one is Lord. This one is Lord. Saying that about him is meant to give us pause.

[30 : 12] Lifelong pause, in fact. This, you see, changes everything. It changes everything. Especially, I think, we can say, going right to the heart of it, I would think, it changes even what we are called to love.

What do we love in the world? If Downton Abbey is a world of high courtesy and honor, well, here is our world of high courtesy and honor.

What do we hold in the highest regard? What do we love? What do we love? Richard Bauckham is simple and profound about these kinds of things.

The concept of idolatry, if I may just raise the idea of idolatry right here, we had it brilliantly talked about at the 730 service this morning.

We were talking this morning about money as a form of idolatry. Surely it is. An idol is something that we love, to put it as simply as you can put it.

[31 : 22] It's a particular kind of thing that we love. The concept of idolatry, says Richard Bauckham, is a biblical theological concept unavailable to a secular society.

And that is having devastating consequences in our world. The result is, again, just devastating, false lords, false forms of transcendence proliferate amongst us.

They're out there galore these days. Creatures, idols, cannot bear the weight put on them by treating them as divine.

Ah, there it is. We abound, again, in lords, do we not? Even naming them at time causes controversy, even in the church.

There are some things which I think are okay to love. And I may have a Christian sister or brother who will come alongside me on occasion and say, maybe not. Maybe you should think again about that little commitment you have to something.

[32 : 31] Idols are subtle and they work their way into our lives. things. But, you see, to say that Jesus is Lord is beyond all expectations.

It's the one thing that comes across our consciousness as the one true divine Lord that I should worship that I don't expect. It's not Paul completely aware of this when he says to the Corinthians, no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

it's strange to say that Jesus is Lord. He sort of doesn't look like a Lord. That's why when Paul writes about him at his most profound moments, he'll always remind the reader or his hearers, remember, this Lord died on a cross.

He was a criminal. In the ancient world, the cross was a place where they put criminals. But that one Jesus is Lord. You cannot really come to call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit's transformation of you, Paul says.

I don't pretend to know what all of that means. But Paul surely is aware of its shocking nature to say that Jesus is Lord.

[33 : 52] This naming of Jesus as Lord is extremely, extremely strange. We become used to it by use, so much easy use.

Here is a bit of speculation in the overall thrust of this, but I hope in the conversation time you can tell me if this is good or bad.

We have many, again, many Lords in our lives. That's uncontroversial. Some of them are probably benign. Others probably become quite vicious in our lives, these little authorities.

But the New Testament regards all of them as dangerous. John says as he ends his first epistle, keep yourselves from idols.

There are public idols and there are private idols. The idol promises fulfillment. It promises really what only the real God may give.

[34 : 55] This morning's sermon was so magnificent on this point. We think that money will bring us, in a large measure, salvation. But it won't.

Jesus is the Savior. Money won't save you. Money is an idol, a classic one. As you give them your devotion, they will dehumanize you because you're only created to worship the living God revealed in Jesus.

Jesus. Sometimes, obviously, you are dehumanized by what you worship, these idols, sometimes in a very slow, hidden way. What does C.S. Lewis call an idol?

It's unforgettable once you hear it. Lewis called idols the sweet poison of the false infinite. We look for them in our lives all the time in all sorts of ways.

Beautiful, glimmering, prestigious idols, some of them pretty tawdry, but we go after them. Saying and understanding Jesus is Lord is the great defense against these idols.

[36 : 08] That's the thing that's a bit speculative. Maybe you can tell me in the conversation time if that's kind of the thrust of what Paul would say. When we say Jesus is Lord, we defend ourselves against all those lesser lords that are trying to crowd into your life.

I think that's what Paul has in mind there when he says only by the Holy Spirit can you say Jesus is Lord. There's so many lords around that we'd like to worship.

They feed our vanity. We have sort of more control in their presence. They're bad. We are to keep ourselves from them, says John. And the reason we can unpack more and more truth out of these words again is for an appreciation of that defense against idolatry.

Perhaps we should move on. Perhaps unpacking more of what the word Christ means will help us in this regard. I think it will. Lord Jesus again should strike us as a strange confession.

confession. It's again revolutionary. It is filled with a meaning yet to be explored in the world. Let's move on to the word Christ then.

[37 : 31] Some folks tell us, if you read Tom Wright much especially, he's one of these folks, they tell us that the word Christ deserves more attention than it has usually received.

And here follows, friends, the beginning of the reason why. We referred to Philippians a moment ago. Let me read to you the first three verses of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

You know these words so well. They're good New Testament words to ponder. Paul and Timothy, that again, Paul writing to the Philippians, he starts this way.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons, with the bishops and deacons if you're an Anglican.

Grace to you and peace, says Paul, as he ends his salutation. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[38 : 48] Paul's opening of one of his letters, pretty standard stuff from Paul. I still find even his salutations weighty for something. That's Philippians again, chapter 1, verses 1 and 2.

People would tell us, okay, let's read that again, but with an obvious change. Paul and Timothy, servants of Israel's Messiah, Jesus, to all the saints in Israel's Messiah, Jesus, who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus, Israel's Messiah. Second reading feel different?

It does to me. It resonates differently. There's just something different. The second reading, it does sound different.

It may be theologically different, or maybe it's, if you will, religiously different than just the way we personally would feel those words.

[40 : 12] Jesus, some people would think, if we go with that second reading, we can say things like this, Jesus as Israel's Messiah, rather than, again, Jesus Christ, Jesus, Israel's Messiah, would refuse any separation, would help us to refuse, to reject any separation of the Testaments.

The Gentiles would not, one would hope, the Gentiles, that would be most of us, wouldn't it? The Gentiles would not be tempted to exalt themselves over the famous branches broken off, so that Gentiles might be grafted in, might be given grace, as Paul famously writes to the Romans, in some of his most astonishing and difficult to understand words in that famous letter.

Bold Isaiah, as Paul calls the prophet, reminded Gentiles, I have been found by those who did not seek for me. I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.

Sort of a hidden meaning there as Paul writes this amazing passage in Romans, that salvation, it's so obvious, salvation totally excludes pride.

The Gentiles weren't looking for God and his salvation, but they have found it. God gave it to them. You Gentiles, you've been given salvation.

[41 : 53] Salvation excludes pride. All that mystery that you find in Romans 9, 10, and 11 about salvation's mind-humbling strangeness comes into view here as Paul writes to the Romans.

God was in Christ, Paul said to the Corinthians. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. God, you see, reconciles the world to himself in Israel's Messiah. God was in God's God. Christ has a lot of richness in it.

Why do we worship idols, therefore, again? Why do we worship false gods? Why do we drink, as Lewis calls the idol, a sweet poison?

Well, it's not too easy to answer, and any answer may sound arrogant. The know-it-all Christian lecturing the world about its foolish sinfulness. Idols, at least in part, do they not, they feed our sense of uniqueness.

[43 : 01] I choose the idols that I worship. It's not a real divine presence that gives me life and death. These idols that I worship are sort of under my control.

They're my set. I set them apart for my worship. Even after Gentiles are saved by grace, they may look down on somebody.

This is what Paul is talking about when he writes to the Romans. Just thinking falsely about God, which that represents, as Paul writes to Gentiles in Rome, is a kind of a root to a kind of idolatry. The idolatry of my group, my crowd, we Gentiles. Those Jews have blown it. God is now getting rid of them. We're the saved ones.

Paul says to think like that is to totally misunderstand. For instance, a word like Christ, for instance. You may turn Jesus into Mr. Christ rather than Israel's Messiah.

[44 : 08] It's a root to a kind of idolatry. I find this topic difficult. I want your feedback for sure. After all, I may be distorting what idolatry is, but I think it's an idolatry to exalt your group over another.

But in my defense, if I am misreading this, is it not so very interesting that when Paul notes that there are factions in the Corinthian church, remember that stuff in Corinthians?

When Paul says, he tells the Corinthians what they're doing. Some of them are saying, I belong to Paul. Others are saying, I belong to Cephas, you know, Peter. I'm the Peter crowd.

Somebody, other people in Corinth were quite proud of the preaching of Apollos. I belong to Apollos. But isn't this odd that some in Corinth took pride, I take it Paul obviously means a very sinful pride in saying, well, I belong to Christ.

See, I'm on the big time team. But they probably were just thinking of Jesus. as their own little idol, almost in a sense.

[45 : 21] They probably would not have appreciated Paul saying to them, you belong to Israel's Messiah. The one who has chosen Israel to be his vehicle for bringing salvation into the world.

God still loves them, has plans for them, as he tells the Romans. That's a very, idolatry, in other words, can be so subtle, it can even come about through our religious assertions.

Boy, that's difficult to take in. Sin may be present where it's least expected. It was even at work amongst the Corinthians, some of whom said, I belong to Christ.

Christ. So they had turned Christ into a reason for pride. Paul does say we boast in the Lord, but it's not a human pride.

It's because the crucified one has been made Lord in the world. The word Christ, all that by way of saying, does reward some careful attention.

[46 : 23] I hope all of these words reward particular attention. I hope looking at these three words is again of some benefit.

They, of course, they are together words. Lord, Jesus Christ. Sometimes on Paul's page or other places in the New Testament, you do come across them a bit isolated, but usually they're crowded together.

Often they do just come together. And for good reason. This morning I received the communion. and each of the persons giving me the communion element said to me, here's the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the next person said, here's the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole mystery of Lord Jesus Christ comes to me in some mystery in bread and wine.

The church enacts the gospel again. What a mystery these words carry. So they are together words. Lord, as I conclude, high and majestic, I am the high and lofty one, says the God of Israel. [47 : 39] And Jesus says, come to me, I am meek and lowly of heart. Yes, the prophet saw that so clearly. The high and lofty one, he dwells with those who are lowly.

And somehow Isaiah saw that these two mysteries came together in the suffering servant. Israel's God returning to Zion as Israel's Messiah is the one we call Christ. The high and the lofty one came into the world meek and lowly to save us. Very God and very man. What a mystery these words bring together. These may be, these words may be the strangest, the strangest group of three words ever living together in speech and on a page together. Lord, Jesus, Christ, Lord, Jesus, Israel's Messiah. All of it, in these three words, the whole mystery of who we are, where we're going, how God is saving us. [48 : 53] The divine Lord of infinite authority, the lowly one, the dying servant, Israel's Messiah. He comes to us to save us.

I hope looking, again, just, I hope you do it in Bible studies or alone. Stop sometimes, I say this myself, people know more about these things than I. You stop and just say, what is that word doing? How does that resonate? What can I learn from that one word? Sometimes it's a bit awkward, you need a surrounding narrative, you need context, of course, but you try and zero in just on a word and see what it can give you. I think it's a benefit to do that, I sure hope it is. That was a swash buckling race through these three words.

I appreciate your patience. Before we have good time for questions and answers, let me conclude with a prayer before we do that. Our Lord, we thank you that you have come to us. [49 : 59] We thank you for that all the riches of wisdom are in you, Lord, and help us to attend to these riches as best we can as your spirit unfolds to us the mystery of the gospel.

Lord, teach us, make us teachable. Our Father God, we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of his spirit in us.

Amen. Amen. Is it communion today?

Yes. It is? Oh, so we have 15 or so minutes to serve. Morning. I'm glad Alexandra's introduction of you was not a disappointment.

I felt the weight of the words that she said and I felt the pressure upon myself if I was being introduced like that. So you handled it very well. And also you inspired me this morning because of this talk on these three words.

[51 : 11] And my question is with the word Lord Jesus, I've always felt it's very apt and very descriptive.

I always felt a little bit, Lord, and Savior Jesus Christ covered it all. And I really felt the protection of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, especially when Jehovah witnesses come to the door and say, let's pray, not to the Lord Jesus because that won't scare them, but you said, Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And I was just curious, with the word Savior, was it something that was used in the past, like in our English past that you know of, or is it something that was dropped often not as common? Because we use it, but it doesn't seem as common as Lord, and there's so many Lords like you said. So, I was just curious about that. I don't know. I thought the word Messiah covers Lord Jesus and Savior and everything.

I know that Roman Caesars were often called saviors. So, when Paul says, it's just very good. I mean, obviously, Lord, Jesus, Christ are not the only key words in clustering near the very center of our faith.

[52 : 26] How about reconciler? There's other really... So, the word Savior is there, but I think you're right to know it's less frequent, I think.

I don't know the numbers. I think Savior is like mediator. And mediator, it's been said, like Tony Thistleton and others, is a mediator, reconciler, has within himself the tension of two parties. God the holy God, man the sinner. So, Jesus takes hold of his godness, empties himself of it, but holds on to the mystery of his divinity and becomes us in Bethlehem in Mary's womb. has the tension of both of us in him and works out salvation. And all of that mystery is caught up in words like, Lord, the divine presence, Jesus, the guy with the genealogies from Nazareth of all places.

Everyone was shocked. He's from Nazareth, eh? The Messiah? What an idea. Like being from Surrey. I take that back. Some of you are from Surrey and I apologize.

[53 : 49] But you know, it's just he's not supposed to come from Nazareth, he's a nobody. So, the reconciling saviness of Jesus, which you rightly point out, I think are hidden away in those two words, Lord Jesus.

The majesty of divinity and the lowliness of the guy. Coming back to my hero Marilyn, the guy with the genealogies, it's not supposed to go together.

Just as very God and very man, it's a very strange set of words, but that's what the church says. I'm sorry for that, I know that's inadequate.

John? Yeah, I wonder when the words Lord Jesus Christ, when did it first start to get used to swear words and why? That's a, John, I have no, that's a good question, I have no idea, I'm not sure why religious words drift over into the world of cursing, but there may be some reason that, I don't, I don't know if it happens in all cultures, is it, this is the word, the language of sexuality drifts over into the world of swearing, sir.

Yeah, in the middle ages and early modern period, profanity was strictly religious, God's body, God's supposed body as his heresy.

[55 : 14] Is there a reason for that? Yes. Body parts, probably sexual functions were not private enough to have any shock value. So our four letter words are part of normal speech.

Thank you, thank you. It wasn't something, as I say, I wasn't, as I said, it was just a passing thought. It made me interesting to notice that if your friends use these words, these crucial words in our faith, they're allowed to come out as quiet little profanities.

Oh, oh, or oh. The third one is quite common. Jesus sometimes has been thrown around.

Anyway, again, it wasn't something. Please. I wonder, Lord, in the past, in this culture, in the Western world, the lowly people, their sentiment towards Lord, is there resentment?

Is there, because I come from the communism education, and the revolution started with this complete resentment.

[56 : 29] the oppressed peasants. You know, this because of the Lord, that is all greedy, that is all oppressive, to, you know, to the low class, cannot stand it anymore.

This is what happened. So this is also why I always have a difficult time to read the Chinese Bible, because this word of Lord reminds me what is that fascinating.

I appreciate that very much. I inadequately tried to bring that out with the lame Downton Abbey talk, but it is a bit of an antique word in our culture now, and it puts religion, we're already back on our heels when at the center of our language we have to invoke a Lord, because it's an old-fashioned word.

It still hangs around the Downton Abbey word on Sunday nights on PBS. Lord Grantham. It's interesting that he's a common time, yes, he's both pathetic, Lord Grantham, and he does, I guess, he's so pathetic it's hard to feel a lot of resentment to him.

He's a Lord who's getting bashed around by Guardian culture as his world is starting to fall apart. So Lords are old fast, like you say, Lords are kind of, sort of, they don't resonate easily with our mind.

[57 : 52] We think of them as either someone pointed out the other day that in Pullman's children's stories, this writer who writes quite explicitly I'm told to attack C.S.

Lewis's Narnia books. He hates Narnia, hates C.S. Lewis's Narnia books. So whenever Pullman refers to a God presence with deep sneering irony apparently.

He puts this in front of children. That God presence is called the authority. You know, another word, the oppressor, the bully, the idiotic presence that you'd like to get rid of so that you can be free and fully human.

You've got to get rid of Lords so that you can have a decent life. So I think Paul's thinking along these lines, you know, he talks about there are many Lords. and he's right.

Your family may have been a Lord that oppressed you or your school or the state. Things that we need but go bad and oppress us, these lousy Lords.

[59 : 02] So Paul, I think Paul is quite aware that when he says Lord Jesus, he's revolutionizing the world. That is a revolutionary thing to say.

this lowly nobody from Nazareth who was crucified on a cross is the Lord. Oh, how it reveals the falseness of the phony Lords.

If they had known what, why did they crucify, Paul says in rhetorical language, why did they crucify the Lord of glory? That's how wrong our Lords are.

They killed the Lord of glory who died for them. It's also utterly revolutionary. He's in the midst of his enemies dying for his enemies.

Whoever heard of a Lord in Rome doing that? The dying Messiah dies, he dies praying for his enemies.

[60 : 05] This is an utterly revolutionary. I know in my life I haven't caught up to it. I want to be, I want to put myself forward in the world as a somebody.

In my case, at my age, it's utterly pathetic. I'm getting to be like Lord Grantham. I'm sort of losing, I had to marry a rich American to bail out the estate.

Things are starting to go bad for the Lord. He is presented as quite an ironic Lord. Anyway, thank you for that. I'm babbling on. Please, my...

discovered all those things by not watching Downton Abbey. I do watch Downton Abbey. I like Downton Abbey.

I want to go back to the sacred thing. But another attachment to the word Lord, I guess, is well substantiated by scripture, or by history, actually, is somebody whose authority you accept.

[61 : 11] Now, with the Vikings, the Earl may have been elected, but after that, you accepted his authority, and you knelt down to prove that you were doing that.

Under the feudal system, it was a give and take. You accept my authority, I will protect you with my knights. But it also became institutionalized over time, which I think is what China may have gotten into.

Because the people whose authority was imposed upon you acted like lords, even though they despised the word. But even Jesus said this, don't call me Lord, unless you are doing the things I want you to do.

And he made that point at least twice in the New Testament. So it did carry that connotation even in his time. There's challenge, yes. Yeah. I think the word Christ being the anointed one was something that other people recognized in him.

But Savior didn't actually happen until he sacrificed for us. So it wasn't a title he had throughout his life. Yeah, that's right. It's over and over again.

[62 : 21] You come across these three words seem to leap out, don't they? But, yes? Well, we're told to not him not say the Lord's name and name, so is it a taboo?

It's not a Christian word to you, but, you know, it says it's forbidden, so that makes it more tempting to do it. Yeah, yeah. Especially, I mean, this is so often pointed out, but I stayed away from it today. But you know the story. I tried to rehearse it for my own benefit. Paul's very much aware this word Lord is a couple hundred years before Paul was born.

some Hebrew guys, smart guys got together and said, let's translate the Hebrew scriptures into Greek. And that's where we get the Septuagint.

It stands for seventy, because the story, it's a lovely story, there were seventy guys who did it. Who knows who did how many. And so they came across, in Hebrew, of course, they're looking at the famous word Yahweh, which is, you know, it's connected with Moses meeting God in the desert.

[63 : 26] Who are you? I am who I am. And it's all that. There's a mystery amongst the Jews, but how to even refer to God. So the translators go, in Greek, they say, let's go with Lord, as a kind of honoring word, which always has that word Yahweh, so to speak, behind it.

I find Bruce Waltke is very moving when he talks about this. When you read the Psalms, he talks about this a lot. When you come across over and over again, we have the word Lord in the Psalter. You should think that just sort of, in a word, I'm not sure if this is his metaphor, but it's mine, behind the word Lord is that mystery, I am who I am. The Lord is my shepherd.

I am who I am, is my shepherd, is the quiet resonance behind Lord. And in Paul's mind, I'm sure that's always there.

When he says Lord Jesus, he is confessing the majesty of Jesus. He is divine. He is uncreated mystery.

[64 : 38] Come amongst us. That's in his mind. So that words can have so much texture and resonance.

and I think teaching power. Can they not? I was very moved by Richard Bauckham, the great New Testament scholar, this past summer. I sat in on his course.

He said personally, I wish he'd expand on this, he just said personally that he personally himself never says the divine name. He thinks it should be revered.

we should be grateful for this word, Lord. It's a reverence word. Or we should talk about heaven did this in my life. Rather than going on and on and on with the Lord's saying his name or saying the word God too casually.

I think there's wisdom in that. Maybe I'm completely wrong. Maybe in the Christian dispensation we don't need that. But I kind of think, sometimes we ramble on too easily about the Lord.

[65 : 47] I just wanted to respond to Shinshin's question again because I thought I really liked your imagery of that lab, even though I don't want to. I really don't want to. I really don't have a TV.

That's where I'm on. The joy of the internet. There are sneaky ways of getting at it. one of the things that I just really like is the extreme contrast.

The traditional Lord that we grew up with that model was so false. An oppressor who put himself up as opposed to exactly the opposite.

True Lord, our Lord, who humbled himself and who loves us and who sacrificed for us as opposed to that complete contrast of us sacrificing.

But then the other contrast that I really really liked was the fact that we choose to serve him. We're not told he is our Lord, we're born on his land, we will serve him, but we choose to sacrifice and to live our lives for him.

[66 : 56] And I find that really helpful because again it highlights what you say is the complete unworldliness of our faith in him. Lord, in the master. Thank you for saying that.

May I will. Marilyn, Marilyn Robinson is a great student of people like Wycliffe and Tyndale and as a student of how they translated scripture.

It's at the heart of the English language. And she's very moving. I think it's either Wycliffe, Tyndale, maybe both refer. Apparently, if I recall, she's the expert.

I'm just a reader of her with a bad memory. But they refer to God as the servant God. That is just, that silences us and it should be.

And that's, I think, your point, Lord Jesus. There it is. There it is. I'm on less firm ground, though, from, I want the saints, we're running out of time, I know, but that Tom Wright thing about Christ, I'm not settled in my mind.

[68 : 12] To show how important that issue is, I think, 50 years from now, maybe 100 years from now, the Lord doesn't return. I wonder if maybe, if Tom Wright's scholarship and others, of course, becomes convincing and it works itself into the world of scholarship and into pastors' training, we may come across English Bibles 100 years from now, which will always not say Christ, they'll say Israel's Messiah.

Because Christ has become that misleading, according to some people, Tom Wright thinks it has, that it's kind of like, those of you who know Tom Wright better than I do in this room, Bill, Am I over-reading Tom Wright on this?

Karl Barth thought it was becoming like a proper name and it should have, he thought. But it is an issue. Because was Paul thinking Israel's Messiah whenever he said Christ Jesus?

He says it all the time. He says it in different orders. Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus. Is he thinking Israel's Messiah or is he thinking a kind of, almost like a name for Jesus, not an office?

There's an issue there. I'm not clear on it. Because it's one of our key words in our scriptures, our liturgies, our hymnody. We're always talking about Christ. And what does it mean?

[69 : 34] Dr. Barlow? So, I quickly look up Wikipedia on the origins of the word. Oh, that's not fair. I'm leaving the room. I thought you were looking up Downton Abbey facts.

Which we may or may not trust, but it gives the word Christ, Greek meaning is the anointed. And then it was used of the translation of Messiah in the Hebrew.

So, of course, when he's talking to another translation would be Jesus Christ, the anointed. Exactly. Messiah means that again.

And then you push meaning into the word anointed. Exactly. from the Hebrew. Isn't it an excellent example of Lewis's point? You're reading old literature and you're zipping along and it's the stuff that you think you understand, that's where you may be being tripped up galore.

But we very much tend to think of Christ as a family name. I know. I know. Exactly. I know. I know some Christians probably do think it's Joseph and Mary Christ and their boy Jesus.

[70 : 45] You know, sir. I think you've made a good case that the word Lord just does not work. It says a lot to me that you reached back to a TV account of kind of a failing aristocracy and ultimately that's, as Sheila was pointing out, she gave a little bit of a historical stretch.

Sure, sure. It's kind of a fuggle word. Sure. It's not even anything past that. It's semantic field. Why aren't we using king?

Well, we don't have too many kings anymore. The ones we have are pretty silly. Why aren't we using president? Well, president is... Never! Never! Or prime minister.

No. Start a revolution. A republican. We're not using those because they are institutionalized regicide. Well, I know. So, in the world that we live in, supposedly democratic, what do we do? We don't have a word. We do not have the word. And the word is no good, sorry, as an English word with all of its freight. Well, all I can say, yeah, there's the issues that all communicators, translators, et cetera, deal with.

[72 : 09] But, I mean, we can... I would stay with the word Lord, and we just have to teach it intelligently. That's... But, I mean, we don't want to become prisoners of the merely contemporary, either, do we?

We don't... Oh, yeah. Maybe there's a help here. We have to slow down and say, hey, by the way, this is sort of the story of this word. But the word is semi-familiar and it splits past, and maybe we need something like fame.

So far, I'm not convinced by the word. Be familiar right. Sorry, please go ahead. How do you define Lord Jesus as the kingship?

We sometimes refer to him, he's the king of the king of the Lord. Well, I would just say ditto again. Words have to be unpacked and used with as much maturity as we can bring to the task.

I don't know how else to answer. But thank you. Yeah, there's all sorts of key words here that are... Please. Three speakers, one, two, and three. Yeah, thank you.

[73 : 19] Please. I just want to add that we were able to attend a couple of Messianic Jewish worships, and they never say Christ.

It's always Meshaya or anointed one or some of David. They never say Christ. Sure. Otherwise, it's the same kind of worship, even with the same similar liturgy.

No, no. They never say Christ. No, yeah. Well, it's just good to be reminded, words are very rich, wonderful. We should consider this a good thing, I think. Go be positive. Isn't it great that words are so rich and we can attend to them, enter into them, see what poets do with them, see what writers do with them, see how they resonate with maturity in us, not just...

You're in charge, buster. The Chinese never used these fingers to swear. Thank you. Thank you. There's many admirable things about Chinese culture.

Thank you very much. And? Well, I agree with what Joe said. I don't think this is only a contemporary problem.

[74 : 29] I think it was even a problem in Jesus' day because he said, the kings of the Gentiles lorded over them, and you must not be like them, you must be a servant.

Why didn't you give this talk? That's brilliant. That's brilliant. Thank you. He was redefining the word. That's exactly what I was talking about.

And you said it in about one sentence. Jesus. I thought it was you. It was very good. You have brilliant people here in row one.