

Christs Words

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[0 : 00] I would like us to turn, as the Lord would enable us, to our second reading that we had this evening, and that is in John's Gospel and chapter 7. John chapter 7, and reading from verse 42. Has not the scripture said that Christ comes of the seed of David and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was. So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him, but no man laid hands on him. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said unto them, Why have he not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. Then answered them, the Pharisees, Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? And so on. And I want to take, which I think really is a challenging statement, albeit that it was given by two men who were not necessarily professing believers, and yet the statement that they make is very profound, albeit maybe not intentional, at least not in the way that we might understand Christ and his speaking. Every one of us here in this building, at one or another camp, and maybe we do present to ourselves a crisis, an identity crisis. There was a crisis going on in the time of Christ. Some didn't know whether to believe that he was the

Christ or not. And as a result of that, of course, there was a great division amongst the people. Oh, I'm sure there were several types of division amongst the people. There was a division as the result of ignorance. There was also a division, not just of ignorance, but of downright unbelief. And those divisions seem to perpetuate themselves generation after generation. And our own generation is certainly no exception to that. On this occasion, as I'm sure you're, if you know our Bible fairly well, we will understand that by this time in the life and the ministry of Christ, the Pharisees and those who had authority at the time amongst the Jews were becoming increasingly frustrated with this man, Jesus Christ.

He was entering upon their domain. They didn't like it. And of course, the result of that dislike of this person, Jesus Christ, the sent one, because they couldn't accept what he was teaching, what he was saying, and even how he was addressing himself to the masses of the people at the time. Just because they didn't like it, they wanted to get rid of him. Of course, they had to be very careful that their hands would not be stained. That's why they would use officers. They would use everyone and anyone they could in order to try and get to know and understand what was going on in the teaching of this man.

These soldiers, because that's all we know them of as, they were just reporters and they were coming back to the Pharisees with everything that Jesus had said. Enough was enough in the mind of the Pharisees. They'd had enough. Let's take him. Let's get him. Of course, they wouldn't come and take him in themselves. That was too much of a risk. Their popularity might take a dive. They were too politically correct to do anything else. Sounds very much like our own politicians of today sometimes. Political correctness keeps them away and they tend to wash their hands or appear to wash their hands of certain things that are taking a place. That's another subject and not for this evening. But one thing is sure, they hated Jesus with as much hatred as it was possible to do.

These two men, they just had a job to do.

They never hated him. Neither could it be said maybe that they loved him. They were probably indifferent. I wonder, are there people here this evening who are indifferent to the claims of Christ upon you?

[5 : 47] You are born into this world by God, under the providence of God. As far as the gospel is concerned, oh, you may not be totally indifferent or else you wouldn't be here. Maybe tradition draws you here, but maybe it's more than tradition. Maybe like the crowds that follow Jesus. There's an inquisitorial streak about us. We just want to have a nose at things. These two men, they were only fulfilling a job.

It wasn't the best kind of job. I doubt if there was anyone here that would even have liked their job at all, no matter how well paid it was. All they were doing was just reporting back on an individual and any who might have been a follower of his. So the Pharisee said, take him. We want him.

Now, I'm sure that there are people here who might be something, who might have experienced something like these two men. Exposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ year after year. It's bound to have an effect upon us, isn't it? And especially when we are not turning our back totally against it, it's bound to have an influence.

And that's what it was for these two men. They heard Jesus. And they heard the milk of the sweetness of the love of Christ emanating from his life and his character, his whole being. More and more as they were exposed to it, its influence was becoming increasingly great. And I think it's tremendous, really. You know, when two people like this, in the kind of employment that they were in, should find themselves even having an interest in anything that Jesus had said.

[7 : 49] When they returned to the Pharisees, it was without Jesus. That in itself was exposing them, not just to ridicule from the Pharisees, but even the threat of their job and their livelihood.

Would anyone do that? Who really didn't have an interest? Would they really threaten their job? Well, as I said at the beginning of the introduction, I don't think for one moment necessarily that these men were followers of the Lord Jesus Christ or were necessarily converted.

But there is one thing is sure. The influence of Christ and his message was so great upon them that they couldn't go on anymore in doing what the Pharisees wanted them to do.

When they returned without Jesus, the Pharisees were aghast. How dare they? How dare they not have Jesus? They compelled them.

They told him, Bring him here, that we might question him. We won't touch him. No, we won't. We won't dirty our hands. It's not lawful for us to do that to anybody.

[8 : 57] But we want to question him on everything that he has said. These two men respond with, I think, what might be classified as timed, honored words.

No man ever spoke like this man. Now, whatever they understood by this Christ, this man, the influence of his words, the influence of Christ was tremendous.

And of course, you and I here this evening as believers, those of us who love him, those who sat at this table, yes, we can say, we can identify with them.

And we can say, no man ever spoke to me like this man. The Pharisees thought, you're deceived. You're deceived. Look at us. We're not deceived. You're deceived. You've taken cognizance of what he is saying, and it's had such an effect upon you that you've even threatened your own job as a result of it.

[10 : 04] You're in danger of losing your credibility in the pharisaical household, so to speak, and in their employment, and they might have been out in the street.

But they couldn't resist what they had seen and what they had heard. It may sound a long introduction, but that doesn't mean to suggest for one moment you're going to be here for another long, long time.

But I want to think and make some suggestions to you about what was the influence of this Christ upon these two men. Make suggestions.

I want also to us all to think whether we are believers or unbelievers. Do we have an identity crisis with Christ? Is he a significant person?

Is he an important person? And is he someone that, up until now, you've either taken or you've left him? Either way, it doesn't matter.

[11 : 11] But maybe tonight, just maybe this evening, something of the testimony of the word of Christ might reach into the hearts of those of you who are far from him.

But there's also something else that I want us to consider. And that is, what influence had Christ upon these people, these two men, that is a similar influence that should affect each and every one of us as believers in Christ as we go on?

Let me take it first of all from the point of view of these two men not claiming to be anything, not followers of Christ apart from the fact that they are employed by the Pharisees to follow him after a secular sort.

The influence is great. But let me go and slip aside a little moment for a moment or two and just have a little conversation with one or two other people.

Those people upon whom the testimony and the word of Christ had a tremendous influence. And I'm sure that for each one of us here this evening, something similar may have happened to you. [12:25] I don't know. But whatever, the word of Christ has come upon you. Why did these men say no man ever spoke like this man?

What was it, for example, what was it to the woman of Samaria? What was it to the woman taken in adultery in the following passage? What was it to the thief on the cross that made the difference? What is it to you and to me? What is it that Christ said that made the difference? Let me go to the thief on the cross just for a moment. What did the thief say?

There was the thief. Yes, that thief who, like his partner in crime, as he announced and as he said when Jesus was there on the cross and the cry came from his friend, you know, save yourself and us.

But this thief said, do you not realize something? this man has done nothing amiss.

[13:33] What changed his tune? Why is it that this thief all of a sudden decides not just to mock and ridicule Christ, he had been doing that along with his friends prior to this, but some or other something had happened that made him change his mind.

Had he listened to Christ before? Maybe some of you are in here this evening and you've never really listened. Yes, you've exposed yourself to the word of God and the testimony, but you've never really listened.

Like these men, they never really listened, at least not all the time. But some or other changes were coming and taking place. For the thief on the cross, the change was stupendous.

He listened all right. He listened to the words of Christ. But it wasn't just to the words of Christ, was it? It's what they said that was so important.

Was it? If you read Professor Finlayson's book *On the Three Crosses*, you'll find there the suggestion that he makes, and that is that this thief might have had numerous reasons why he had changed in his life at that very eleventh hour.

[14:59] But one of them would have been, possibly, that he listened to Jesus announce to the whole assembled gathering, remember, he is in pain, he is suffering, he is experiencing the wrath of God for sin, he's going through all of this, and at the same time he's attentive to the cry of this poor man.

What was it that made the difference for him? Do you remember what Jesus said at the beginning? The first statement that he made on the cross was, Father, forgive them.

Father, forgive them. Was there hope in these words for the thief? Is there hope in these words for you and for me this evening?

Of course there are. However far we have been from the kingdom of Christ, there is hope for us. In those words of Christ, Father, forgive them.

It's not a case of Christ calling out there into that company, that assembled company, and saying, forgive them willy-nilly. It's not that. What Christ is calling out there is concerning the character of his being as he looks upon a rebellious people and a people that do not understand, and a people who have forsaken the word of God and followed the ways of this world, just in the same way that maybe some of us here have continued in our lives.

[16:36] Jesus is saying, Father, forgive them. You know, sometimes people might think that they are saying the right thing with regard to someone maybe who is a wayward person, someone who is living in this world and living almost a debauched life.

And we think, yes, I know what to say at this moment. I know I will challenge them with their lifestyle. I will say something that will maybe, as it were, bring them to heel and cause them to think. Sometimes I think for those of us who bear testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and are witnesses for him, need to take a long listen to the words of Christ.

Father, forgive them. Was that what this thief in the cross heard? were these words to this man words of hope, words of comfort?

There was nothing that was going to change his painful condition. He was going to continue in pain and suffering. Nothing was going to rescue him from the end result of this that was taking place.

[17:58] He was going to die. But he heard from the lips of Christ words that really melted a stony heart.

Jesus said, Father, forgive them. The response, of course, of the thief was to say, Remember me, Lord, when you come into your kingdom.

And immediately Jesus replies, Today you will be with me in paradise. It's tremendous, isn't it? That our Savior looks upon this man, the eleventh hour of his experience in this life, sitting on the very verge of eternity, sitting on the edge of a lost eternity, and he says it to souls, maybe here in this evening, you may be sitting at the very edge of a lost eternity.

What is your hope? What is your help? It is Christ. And no one will speak to you like Christ will speak to you. No one will. No one.

The woman of Samaria, she heard it all. Oh, I'm sure there were plenty who would accuse her. The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans, that's what she said.

[19 : 22] And certainly she would have kept them kept out of their way because she knew fine how they would have treated her. But this Jesus enters into our experience, and what a profound lesson there is for us in the way that not only does he speak to her and opens up her heart and delivers us, delivers her from that condition, but so much so that his influence was great.

Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ? It marks out before us, does it not, the authority of Christ, the authority with which Christ himself speaks.

He speaks to every soul that seeks him. Does he not? What is he saying to you this evening, my friend? If you are an unbeliever tonight, you know where you are at.

We sung that in the Psalms. We read it also in Job. God knows everything. We can hide nothing from him. We are what we are. We are where we are before God, and you cannot hide.

No one can hide from him. So you're exposed. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to flee from the wrath to come? Is that all that maybe we ever think of, that that's a possibility?

[20 : 43] Wrath, wrath, wrath? What does the word in the testimony say? What does it say of Christ? He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth.

Is that not true? My friend, if you are an unbeliever this evening, take thought of what Christ is saying, what Christ is saying to you and what he is saying concerning you.

You know from the word that you have heard before, even though you haven't listened to it and acted upon it, you have neglected it, you have ignored it, and you are on the very precipice of hell. What are you to do? Lift up your eyes to him. Plead with him. Because he knows, you know, that according to his word, what he wants to do is to reach out.

You come in that humble, penitent spirit. Even these officers themselves, I would suggest, in their response to the Pharisees, almost displays some influence of Christ upon them.

[21 : 59] no man spoke like this man. But am I getting the tenor of it wrong? Am I reading it wrongly? Should I read it in another tone of voice?

Should I read in another tone of voice what Jesus said when he was on the cross there, Father, forgive them? just a little while ago, I was told to put on the lapel mic because the people might not hear me because I dropped my voice.

Voice is terribly important. And I wish we, as believers and unbelievers, and I'm going to say it to all of us, I wish that we would listen to Christ, to listen to his voice, listen to the tenor of his voice, listen to how he says what he does say.

Remember we read there in Job chapter 23 these very beautiful words and I want to quote them and I don't want to get them wrong so I want to turn it up.

in Job 23 and at verse 12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips.

[23 : 25] I've esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. I've esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

Do you know there's something almost ironic about that statement in relation to the two disciples to the road to maize and I've got to be careful that I don't say something that scripture is not intending to say.

I know that. but when we esteemed the words of Christ above everything else that rattles through our brains whether it be through media or anything else let us be able to sift out what is good what comes from the lips of Christ what is for our spiritual good for what is for our spiritual awakening. it took a little while for the woman of Samaria to knuckle down and listen to Christ every time she sought some kind of reason to respond to him and to argue against him moment by moment she did it until eventually she was exhausted by what tired of speaking to him no Christ got through to her the message that he had to speak to her came through loud and clear and she couldn't hide away from it anymore what Jesus had said was absolutely true and again you listen to Christ speaking to her try if it's possible for human beings 2,000 years later on to enter into the spirit of

Christ in the words that he said the tenor of these words the tone of these words and everything I've often thought you know it's a good exercise to read everything that was said by Christ in the New Testament read through if you have a red letter edition of the Bible read through it word for word statement for statement and try and ask yourself how is Christ speaking here what kind of voice is he speaking with what is he saying to me what is the challenge what is the nature of the challenge you know one thing I find about Christ Christ is not one of those people that needs to shout he doesn't have to shout his words are so penetrating that even the most hardened sinner can be weakened by his words the woman of Samaria the thief on the cross even

[26 : 20] Saul of Tarshish what an experience that was Saul of Tarshish the man who thought he had all authority he had letters of authority to go to the leaders of the church in Damascus to try and take back with him those who were followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and he was stopped in his tracks on the road to Damascus again listen to what Jesus is saying and ask yourself how is he conducting his conversation his challenge to this man Saul of Tarshish read Acts chapter 9 again and ask yourself what is Jesus saying here how is he saying it Saul Saul it is hard for you to kick against the pricks Saul was a man who was challenging everything and every conscience crisis maybe that he had if he did have it but he was challenging everything concerning the

Lord Jesus and it didn't take some great powerful oration to soften the heart of that man the moment that he heard the voice of Christ speaking to him he was in absolute submission it wasn't because Christ hollered at him it wasn't because he used great decibels no not at all it wasn't necessary it's that penetrating influence of the voice of authority speaking into a soul that needs to be challenged with the purity of the word of God concerning their own state Christ's words we know from scripture and from those who heard him they were comforting words they were gracious words no one ever spoke like this man these two men when they heard

Jesus time and time again were softened they were weakened the Pharisees were still as hard as nails challenging everything that they said have any of the rulers or if the Pharisees believed on him so what are there people here saying well if there are certain people in our society people of influence if they come to faith in the Lord Jesus maybe I will out of people who have an influence in my life but not for me are we challenging Christ are we challenging the statements that he makes to us concerning our need I want to leave you with this thought it's not a profound thought not by a long chalk I want to leave you with this thought every word that you have ever heard from this pulpit every word that you ever heard whether you were in school or wherever every word that was spoken concerning the word of God it will challenge you at the end of the day

God through his prophet Isaiah say so does he not don't think you can sit here on the Sabbath evening of a communion service and say it's got nothing to do with me of course it has at this moment in time you're living in the opportune time the day of grace the day of mercy the day of hope but a day is coming when Christ's words will not be so comfortable will not be so compassionate he's going to say to many depart from me for I never knew you the opportunity is passed will it be tonight for some of us here that the opportunity will be passed well remember this God says my word will not return to me void it will accomplish what I please it will prosper in the thing whereto

I sent it first of all it is a word of salvation and redemption of that there is no doubt and you who sat at the table with recipients but one day it's going to come and it's going to come upon those who have neglected and rejected that word upon the Pharisees of this present age upon the self righteous the people that think that they're better or just as good as anybody else it's going to come and it's going to come like a sledge hammer so much so that you're going to wonder what hit you and you're going to wish oh I wish I wish that I'd listened and acted upon the gospel challenge God's word doesn't go out tonight for nothing and however weakly it might be presented by any preacher of the gospel remember it's his word you have heard it you cannot deny it and it will come back and maybe it will haunt you so why don't we why don't we do the right thing why don't we ask [32 : 16] Christ just like the thief on the cross why don't we ask him remember me with a humbled spirit confessing no man has ever spoken to me like Christ shall we pray oh lord our gracious god exposure to thy word is not something that we should take lightly every time we pass this way every time that thy word is heard and outhearing it desires a response for those who believe that we would believe more sincerely that we would live our lives in greater obedience that we would follow the ways of Christ more sincerely that we would love him with all our hearts and with all our souls and with all our minds and to those who are on belief the challenge is still the same repent and

believe the challenge is a heart exposed to grace or to judgment what is it to be will we live by faith in the

Lord Jesus Christ or we take a chance in a lost eternity oh forgive us we pray thee if we fall foul of that danger forgive us oh Lord for all the hindrance that we have shown in our own appreciation of that word of life so Lord continue with us accept of us in Jesus Amen