

**Pastor Jim Lloyd**

**Date: April 10, 2016**

**Title: Who Is Jesus?**

**Text: Philippians 3:10-11**

*<sup>10</sup>"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup>and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."*

I've been reading and studying concerning the gifts of the Spirit and the last few weeks we've looked at Jesus and His work on the cross and on Easter we looked at the resurrected Christ. In reading Romans 12, I've looked at the motivational gifts that God longs to give the church. Romans 12:6-8 - *<sup>6</sup>"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. <sup>7</sup>If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; <sup>8</sup>if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."*

A few weeks ago we looked at the gift of prophesying. Next in that list is serving and teaching. When you go to the scripture and you look for examples of serving and teaching, do you know who comes up front and center? JESUS. Today I want us to look intently at Jesus.

Suppose you were to meet someone who had NEVER heard of Jesus. They hadn't read about Him. No one had ever spoken to them of Jesus. They simply didn't know anything about Him. WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THEM? Where would you start? What is the most important things you might say? I've asked that question of myself this week. What would I want them to know about this Jesus whom I have devoted my life to following? Going further, I wondered also what would I say to believers - those who have made at least an initial commitment to following Christ, but have not yet really embraced the details of His life, His nature, His character, and His purpose for His people. What would they need to know about Jesus in order to follow Him more faithfully?

Most people who have been to church a few times know at least a little bit about Jesus' life and ministry, but the problem is that we tend to view Him today through such a modern filter that, if we were to come face-to-face with the Biblical Jesus - this first century Jewish rabbi/carpenter from Galilee - we might not recognize Him.

Back in the middle ages, and especially during the Renaissance, when artists would paint a picture of a Biblical scene, they had no idea how to accurately portray life in ancient times, specifically in terms of fashion or architecture, so they tended to paint Biblical characters and locations in ways that looked very much like 14th, 15th, or 16th century Italy, France and Germany.

I'm thinking that we might be guilty of doing much the same thing today when we think about Biblical characters - especially Jesus. We often see Him through the filter of who WE ARE, as one fitting into OUR MOLD and being one of us. In the sixties during my teen years, during the Jesus Movement - many held Jesus as the prototypical hippie. Long hair, beard, sandals, talked a lot about love and peace, lived a nomadic lifestyle. Kinda sounds like a hippie, doesn't it? Today we still have a tendency to try to make Jesus into our image, to put OUR own particular spin on who He is, so that He fits into OUR own personal niche. He's been presented to us as a business leader in books such as *Jesus CEO* or *The Management Methods of Jesus*. Some see Him as a true blooded red white and blue American. Or the Ultimate Republican. Some have declared Him as the Ultimate Democrat. And even others, see Him as the Ultimate Socialist. Some portray Him as a first century version of Mr. Rogers. Others portray Him as a first century Chuck Norris. And, of course, many a church - including Marlowe Assembly - portrays Him as one who would be right at home in OUR congregation, and would be an enthusiastic supporter of OUR style of worship and ministry. We have seen Jesus through the filter of ourselves for so long that at times we run the risk of missing a very important point. It's NOT for us to spin Jesus into OUR likeness. It's for you and me to CONFORM ourselves into HIS LIKENESS. In order to do this, we need to know Him as He is. We need to know Him as He is revealed to us in Scripture. The good news is that Scripture paints a very detailed picture of who Jesus is and what He is like. What we discover, as we read about Him in the gospels, is that many times, He is not at all what we might expect Him to be. He's full of surprises. But if you will spend time with Him in the gospels, you will get to know Him very well - even as you know a best friend. I challenge you to examine the person of Jesus. That means going deeper than just the stories we learned at Vacation Bible School or Sunday School and deeper than the parables we've heard preached from time to time, so that we can not only know ABOUT Him - but so that we can truly KNOW HIM. And as we learn about who He was and who He is, we'll also have the chance to think about WHO WE NEED TO BECOME...how we can become more faithful followers of our Lord. Today, I want to talk just about Jesus. What makes Him DIFFERENT from any other religious leader? Why does HE deserve our

devotion? There are three things about Jesus that I want us to consider today.

- 1. JESUS IS GOD.** He is God in the flesh. The Eternal God. Not an angel. Not just a pre-existent supernatural being. Not merely a god. He is THE God. The Eternal God. Jesus has always existed and will always exist. John 1:1 says, *"In the beginning was the Word..."* The Greek word for "Word" is *logos*; John is referring to Jesus. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God. Jesus and God the Father, as well as the Holy Spirit, are One. One God. Each uniquely identifiable, yet One in nature. This is what we're referring to when we say that WE BELIEVE IN THE TRINITY - God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is not a simple concept to understand. Neither do I find it particularly easy to explain, BUT then, it only stands to reason that the nature of God would be somewhat beyond our ability to comprehend. If we could break down and decipher God like a mechanic breaks down the carburetor of a car, then He would be a very small, very limited God. But God is not small. Not at all. Our God is great - far beyond our ability to comprehend and He always will be. 1 Corinthians 13:9-12 - *"For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup>but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. <sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. <sup>12</sup>Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."* But we can, at least, begin to understand some aspects of His nature and character. What has been revealed to us is that Jesus Christ is the Eternal God. He HAS always existed and WILL always exist. Later in the gospel of John, when Jesus was debating with some religious leaders, He made the comment that Abraham rejoiced to see Him (Jesus) coming into the world. John 8:57-58 - *"You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, 'and you have seen Abraham!' <sup>58</sup>'I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I AM!'"* The religious leaders said, in effect, "Come on. You're not even 50 years old, and you claim to have seen Abraham, who lived two thousand years ago?" Jesus responded to the Pharisees saying... *"I tell you the truth...before Abraham was born, I AM."* They immediately understood what He was saying. This phrase, "I AM" goes back to the book of Exodus. It's the name by which God calls Himself when He's talking to Moses on Mount Sinai. So, when Jesus said, *"Before Abraham was born, I AM,"* He was saying, in effect, "I have always existed. I am eternal. I am God." The Bible says that after Jesus said this, the religious leaders picked up stones to stone Him to death. Why? Because He said He was God. And it would be blasphemy, IF what He said wasn't true. And that's why I want to remind you, right off the bat, that we really don't have the option of saying that Jesus was just a good man or just a good teacher. Jesus never claimed to be just a good man, or just a good teacher. HE CLAIMED TO BE GOD. And a person who claims to be God is either a lunatic, or a liar, or HE IS LORD. He REALLY IS who He says He is. It has to be ONE of the three, it can't be a little bit of all three. Jesus claimed to be God. As we come to know Him, we need to know Him on His terms, based on who He claims to be, and who the Bible claims that He is. In the book of Colossians, Paul wrote, *"He is the image of the invisible God...For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created by him and for him"* (1:15-16). By Him and for Him. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the creator of the universe. Everything we see was made by Jesus, this carpenter from Galilee, and everything we see was made not only BY Him, but FOR Him. The book of Revelation says, *"For thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created"* (4:11). Luke 12:32, *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* Rev. 4:11 tells us everything was created for His pleasure. Luke 12:32 tells us it is the Father's pleasure to give us His kingdom. We begin our journey into knowing Jesus by understanding, first of all, that He is God, the Eternal God, the creator of all that exists, and the reason for all that exists. Whether a person believes that or not, they need to know that any study of Jesus will ultimately lead in this direction - that He's not just a good teacher, He's the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Many a Christian has no problem with that; they accept it without question. More Christians seem to struggle with the next part.
- 2. JESUS IS A MAN.** I'm saying that the Jesus we encounter in the gospels is human, FULLY HUMAN. Many people are okay with the idea that Jesus is eternal. It's somewhat easy for them to accept the idea that He was not really one of us, as the early Gnostics taught. They think, instead, that He floated His way through His life on earth in an other-worldly, ethereal sort of way. But that's not what the Bible teaches. The challenge for many people is in accepting the idea that Jesus was, in every way, fully human as He walked this earth and lived among us. He WAS man. He was never less than fully human. He was neither a ghost nor an angelic being walking around in a heavenly body that merely appeared to be real. He was fully human. When He was hungry, He ate. When He was tired, He yawned, and then He went to sleep. When He was working in the carpentry

shop, if He breathed a little too much dust in the air, He sneezed. When He was handling rough wood, He may have gotten a splinter in His hands. When He cut Himself, He bled. When He was young, He learned - how to walk, how to talk, and how to use the tools of a carpenter. In the synagogue, He learned the Scriptures - THE VERY SCRIPTURES HE HAD INSPIRED TO BE WRITTEN. This is why the Bible says that during His life, *"Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man"* (Luke 2:52). And it is also why the Bible says that Jesus *"learned obedience from what he suffered"* (Hebrews 5:8). He learned obedience. Isn't that an interesting phrase? As God there is no learning. He is all-knowing, BUT as man He LEARNED obedience. We need to realize that Jesus was not Clark Kent-like, where the bullets just bounced off His chest even when He was wearing His earthly disguise. He was a man, as fully human as He could be. Paul said, *"For since death came through a man...[he's talking about Adam]...the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man...[referring to Jesus]"* (1 Corinthians 15:21). Paul refers to Jesus as a man in this text. In other places, as we saw earlier, Paul refers to Jesus as THE ETERNAL GOD. That's because HE WAS FULLY BOTH. Jesus also made this clear when He talked about who He is. Do you know by which name He often called Himself? SON OF MAN. Something like 79 times in the gospels He refers to Himself as the Son of Man. Luke 19:10 - *"For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost."* Mark 10:45 - *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."* Matthew 16:27 - *"For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with the angels..."* John 1:51 - *"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."* And I could give you some 70+ more examples, if you want. Books have been written about what this term - Son of Man - means. At the very least, it means that He is, like we are, descendants of Adam. In other words, it means that He is, like we are, fully human. He's not a super hero making an appearance in a costume. He's a real, living, breathing human man - a man subject to being human. There's another verse that we've all heard that we sometimes have a hard time believing. That verse is found in the book of Hebrews. *"For we do not have a high priest [meaning Jesus] who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin"* (4:15). Most Christians easily believe the "without sin" part, but we often struggle with the idea that He really was tempted in every way, just as we are - because WE KNOW how UGLY temptation can be. Jesus WAS tempted just as we are; the difference is that He never yielded to temptation. But He WAS TEMPTED nonetheless, because HE WAS A MAN, fully human, and subject to being human. This is an important aspect of understanding who Jesus is, because in order for Him to be the Savior that we need, WE NEED HIM TO BE BOTH. We can't save ourselves. We need God's help. It's obvious that we can't save ourselves. You only have to look around. The experts tell us that we have the resources to take care of everyone on the planet. There need not be poverty, or hunger, or rampant disease, or war. We COULD experience global peace and prosperity. We COULD, but we CAN'T, because we're a BROKEN people and a FALLEN race, and WE CANNOT SAVE OURSELVES. We need God's help. John 3:17 - *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

- 3. JESUS CAME TO GIVE EVERYONE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE FULLY ALIVE.** One of Jesus' most famous sayings is - *"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"* (John 10:10). There are two ways that we experience this abundant life that Jesus promised to all people. One is that we follow the example that He gave us to live by, because He gave us a PERFECT EXAMPLE to follow. In Jesus we see what it means to be FULLY SURRENDERED to God. This is why it's so important to understand that He became ONE OF US, because in HIS LIFE we see what the human life should be. Because He shows us: in His prayer life, in His worship, in His submission to the will of God, in His compassion toward others, in the way He responds to insults and mistreatment, in the way He shows mercy, and on and on. When we read the stories of Jesus, we often see: This is what you're supposed to do. This is how you're supposed to act. This is what men and women were designed to do and created to be. When we pattern our lives after His example, we really are entering into becoming fully alive. We enter into the ABUNDANT LIFE. But BEFORE you can fully follow His example, there's a FIRST STEP you need to take in His direction. You need to receive Him as your Lord and Savior. YOU need to be made ALIVE SPIRITUALLY. Jesus said to Nicodemus, *"You MUST be born again"* (John 3:7). This means that the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, comes to live inside you. Following Jesus is about more than accepting a new philosophy or ideology. It's about having a genuine ONE-ON-ONE personal encounter with the living God - the God who has made Himself known to us through His Son Jesus Christ. If you haven't experienced this already, you can begin this new life any time you want. You can do it today. You MIGHT be able to do it tomorrow or next week. Obviously, I would say the sooner the better, because knowing Jesus does give you a life more abundant and more meaningful than you could ever imagine.

**4. CONCLUSION.** I trust it will always be our goal to learn more about Jesus. The Apostle Paul, after many years of following Jesus, as he sat in a Roman prison, facing possible death, wrote about what really mattered to him. *"I want to know Christ..."* he said. *"I want to know Christ and power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."* To KNOW HIM and BECOME LIKE HIM. This should be the goal of all who come to Jesus. It is not for us to spin Jesus into our likeness, but to conform ourselves into His likeness. To know Him, as He is made known to us in Scripture. I encourage you to go to the gospels and spend some time with Jesus. Go to your most comfortable chair or a favorite quiet place and read for five or ten minutes from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Pick a gospel and work your way through it, one story at a time. If you do it in the morning, throughout the day you'll have a chance to think about what you read. You will not only know ABOUT Him more and more, you will KNOW HIM more and more. And the more you KNOW Him, the more you can BECOME LIKE HIM.