

Jesus is Lord

Jesus is Lord, is our topic. 'Jesus is Lord' is the earliest, shortest and simplest of all Christian creeds. And those who made this profession during the early days of the Church were baptised and welcomed into the Christian community because it was recognised, as the Apostle Paul wrote, that **'if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.'** (Romans 10:9) And in another text he wrote, **'no-one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.'** (1 Cor. 12:3)

Now it may seem extraordinary that only two Greek words (because that's what they are: Lord Jesus, or Jesus Lord) could possibly be a satisfactory basis on which to identify somebody as a Christian.

Although the formula consists of only two words (Lord Jesus, Jesus Lord) they are pregnant with meaning. And those implications for our Christian faith and our Christian life are positively enormous. They express, on the one hand, a conviction about Jesus and on the other, a commitment to Jesus. And it is those two things that I want us to consider this morning.

1) Our theological conviction about Jesus

Look at verses 9-11 'Therefore [one of the mighty 'therefore's of the Bible, because the Son of God humbled Himself and became a servant, was obedient even to death on a cross, down, down, down He came; and therefore ...] **God has highly exalted Him** [literally has super-exalted Him] **and given him the name that is above every name** [that is to say a rank beyond every rank and a dignity beyond every dignity; has ushered Him to His right hand, to the place of supreme honour and glory and power and executive authority in the universe. , In the version we heard read this morning verse nine is translated this way. "God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever". God has so super-exalted Jesus **so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord'**

I want to invite you to note three things that Paul does. Paul gives to Jesus a God Title, transfers to Jesus a God text and demands for Jesus God worship.

(a) Paul gave Jesus a God-title.

That is 'the Lord' - it is a title for God. In order to understand that we need to remember that when the time came (about 200 BC) for the Old Testament to be translated from Hebrew into Greek, in order to form what we call the Septuagint, which happened in Alexandria in Egypt, the Jewish scholars who were making the translation did not know what to do with the sacred word YAHWEH, the sacred name of God. They didn't feel able to translate it (it was untranslatable) or to transliterate it. They didn't feel able even to pronounce it, so sacred was the name of God, YAHWEH. So do you know what they did? They replaced it. They paraphrased it and they put in place of YAHWEH a Greek word meaning 'the Lord'. It comes 6,156 times in the Old Testament.

6,156 YAHWEH is translated 'the Lord'. Knowing this well, the early disciples of Jesus did not hesitate to give Him the title 'the Lord'. They knew it was a divine title. They gave it to Jesus nonetheless.

(b) Paul transferred to Jesus a God-text.

Philippians 2:9-11 are a very clear echo of or allusion to Isaiah 45:23. YAHWEH is soliloquizing, and as He talks to Himself He said (this is YAHWEH speaking): **'By myself I have sworn, Before me every knee will bow, and by me every tongue will swear.'** And finding this verse in Isaiah Paul re-applies the text to Jesus. So that the universal homage that was due to YAHWEH is now due to Jesus. He transferred the text from YAHWEH to Jesus. It is an amazing thing that he dared to do it.

(c) Paul demanded for Jesus God-worship.

To bow the knee is to worship. And to bow the knee to Jesus would be idolatry if He were not God.

Can we remember those three things? (a) Paul gave Jesus a God-title; (b) he transferred to Jesus a God-text; (c) he demanded for Jesus God-worship. Those three things are incontrovertible. From the earliest days Jesus was recognised and acclaimed and worshipped as nothing less than God. So that is the first implication of the words 'Jesus is Lord'. They express a theological conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the Son of the living God, worthy of our worship.

2) Our personal commitment to Jesus

I want to spend the rest of the time on the second implication of saying “Jesus is Lord”. It expresses not only a theological conviction about Him, but a radical personal commitment to Him. The Greek term meaning, ‘the Lord’, was used of owners of land, owners of property, owners of slaves, who had the right to use them in whatever way they wished.

Everywhere in his letters Paul expresses the theme that discipleship involves a radical, personal commitment to Jesus Christ. This is implied in the words, “Jesus is Lord”.

So let me enlarge on this and suggest two of its major implications.

(a) To say Jesus is Lord has an intellectual dimension.

I begin with the mind because our mind is the control tower of our personality. Our mind effectively directs our lives. And yet, if the truth be told, it is often the last stronghold that capitulates to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. No, we rather like to think our own thoughts, thank you very much. We rather like to ventilate our own opinions: and if they come into collision with the teaching of Jesus then so much the worse for Him. That is how some people talk today. They feel at liberty to disagree with their teacher. But no, Jesus claims Lordship over our minds. You recall Matthew 11:29-30, where after He issued the invitation, “**Come unto me all you that labour,**” He went on to a second invitation: “**Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.**”

Well, a yoke is a horizontal wooden bar laid upon the necks of oxen. And in the Old Testament it is always a symbol of submission to authority. So the Jews used to refer to the yoke of Torah: they submitted to the authority of the Law. And then Jesus came along and said, “**Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me . . .**” Submit to my teaching authority “**. . . and you will find rest unto your souls**” - because it is an easy yoke.

Now, this humble submission of our minds to Jesus Christ as our Teacher, so that we learn from Him, is indispensable to radical Christian discipleship. We can hardly claim to be converted unless we have been intellectually converted. And we cannot claim to be intellectually converted until and unless we have brought our minds into submission to the teaching authority of Jesus. St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:5 said that we are to “take every thought captive to obey Christ”

There is an urgent need today to take upon us the yoke of Christ, to sit at His feet like Mary of Bethany and listen to His teaching. In these days in which weird and wonderful speculations are abroad, even in the Christian community, we need to accept the teaching authority of Christ.

For only when we do will we find intellectual freedom. Intellectual freedom is quite different from free thought. Free thought claims liberty to believe anything without any limits or restraints, whether it is true or not. But intellectual freedom is freedom to believe only the truth. Because the mind is free only when it is submitting to the truth, whether it is scientific truth or Biblical truth, it is under the authority of truth that the mind is truly free. Jesus said so. He said, if you follow me and my teaching you will be truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will liberate you, will set you free. It is a wonderful thing to bring our minds under the authority of truth and find intellectual freedom that way.

So to say, “Jesus is Lord” has an intellectual dimension.

(b) It also has a moral or ethical dimension.

All around us moral standards are slipping. People are confused as to whether there are any absolutes left. Relativism has permeated the world and is even seeping into the Church in the Western world. If you want to know what Relativism is, then let me share with you this with you:

It all depends on who you are
and it all depends on how you are.
It all depends on how you're raised
and it all depends on what is praised.
What's right today is wrong tomorrow -
in Europe joy, in Asia sorrow.
It all depends on point of view,
Australia or Timbuktu.
In Rome, do as the Romans do.
If tastes just happen to agree,
why then you have morality!
But where there are conflicting trends,
it all depends, it all depends.

Now, that is the bog of Relativism in which so many people are floundering today. And over against it we hear the call of Jesus to obedience - an unpopular word but a necessary word in our Christian discipleship.

One of the clearest texts where Jesus tells us that he expects our obedience if we claim love for him is found in John 14.21. This is that part of John known as the Upper Room Discourse. John alone records for us in detail what Jesus taught his disciples in the hours leading up to his Passion. This is what he says in 14.31 **“He [or she] who has my commandments and keeps them, he [or she] it is who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and I will manifest myself to him.”** Isn’t that a wonderful promise? “I will manifest myself” (I will make myself known to him, I will reveal myself to him). Isn’t that what all of us long for? - that we should know Jesus Christ personally and better than we do - that He should become to us a living, bright reality from day to day. Well, here is a promise: “I will manifest myself to him.” But, it is a conditional promise. And the condition is that He reveals Himself to those who love Him: **“He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and I will manifest myself to him.”**

So, who are His lovers? There is only one way to prove that we love Jesus - and that is that we obey His commandments. So the test of love is obedience. And the reward of love is the self-manifestation of Christ. So, we have no liberty to disagree with our Teacher, and we have no liberty to disobey our Lord. So to say “Jesus is Lord” has an intellectual dimension, it has a moral dimension.

On this Palm Sunday may we go forward into Holy Week knowing that the one whose Passion we recollect is the Lord, Yahweh. The Apostle Paul teaches that this phrase is pregnant with meaning because it contains a conviction about Jesus and tells us something important about our commitment to Jesus. To say Jesus Lord means that we are convinced that Jesus has had attributed to him a God Title, has had transferred to him a God text and has had demanded for him God worship.

This in turn tells us two things about our commitment to Jesus. As our intellect comes under his Lordship our conduct will be lived out in obedience to him and so we will show him how much we love him. He in turn will manifest himself to us.

Surrender all of your life to him today. Because he is Lord this is his rightful demand. Because he is the Lord of the Passion you are free live your life your own way or to

choose to love him and live your life his way.