

What We Believe about Jesus Christ

April 16, 2017

Today, our aim is to take a look at some of the most important things that we need to understand about Jesus. But before we jump into that, I need to make a confession: If you don't come to our church that often, please understand that we don't always dress up this nicely. We're pretty regular people here. We wear blue jeans, enjoy a cup of good coffee, and we're looking forward to fishing opener next month. We are a gathering of people who consider ourselves a Grace Community; normal folks, gathered together because we've been rescued by God's Amazing Grace.

The reason some of us are dressed up a little more than usual today is because today is a VERY special day for us. The only reason that any of us can even be a part of this Grace Community, is because of Easter Day. Because of who Jesus is, what He did on the cross on Good Friday makes all the difference on Easter morning. So, we're going to focus on what we believe about Jesus this morning.

1. First of all, we believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human.¹ This doesn't mean 50% of each; it means 100% fully God and 100% fully human. Sounds impossible to us right! It's something that theologians call the "Hypostatic Union." It's an incredible concept to ponder with all kinds of interesting ramifications.

Jesus is fully human; born with a physical body. As God incarnate, He became flesh.² Luke 2:52 teaches us that, "...Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." So, He was once a young boy who grew up on the north side of Israel in a place called Galilee. One of my favorite musicians, Rich Mullins, wrote a song called "Boy Like You, Man Like Me." In this song, he asks some interesting questions about Jesus' humanity. Let me read you a few of his lyrics:

[Jesus], Did the little girls giggle when You walked past? Did You wonder what it was that made them laugh? Did You wrestle with a dog and lick his nose? Did You play beneath the spray of a water hose? Did You ever make angels in the winter snow? Can you picture that? Now, it doesn't snow in Galilee all that often but it is actually a pretty mountainous region, so Jesus likely at least saw snow as a young boy. But, occasionally it does get cold enough to snow where Jesus grew up. So, I imagine "what if?" What if it snowed one day and he went outside to play and decided to make a Snow Angel? I envision His Heavenly Father looking down on Him and smiling. And then, I imagine all the angels gathering around God the Father and watching the Son of God, who is fully God, making a Snow Angel. That would be classic.

Rich Mullins song goes on. Did You ever get scared playing hide and seek? Did You try not to cry when you scraped Your knee? Did You ever skip a rock across a quiet creek? Last week, we talked about God walking in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the morning. God loves enjoying time with His creation. I think Jesus probably did lots of things like the ones that Rich Mullins wrote about. He was fully human. He encountered all of the kinds of things that you and I encounter as humans. Jesus wept, got tired, ate and drank, and experienced temptation.

One of the reasons Jesus lived out an earthly human life, was to teach us and to set an example for us. John 13:12-15 says that, "When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

Another reason that Jesus lived out an earthly human life was so that He could die an earthly human death. Philippians 2:5-8 tells us that Jesus, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by

¹ To learn more about Jesus as "God Incarnate," please contact our church office and request a copy of the sermon "Truly God," by Pastor Fred Martin. It was preached on Dec. 8, 2002, at EFC Bemidji.

² See John 1:1-14

taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”

Jesus is also fully God.³ This is clear from the verse we just read, Philippians 2:5 mentions Jesus, “Who, being in very nature God...” This means that He has the exact same power and attributes as God the Father. So, Jesus is holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing. He has limitless knowledge and sovereign power. In John 8:58 Jesus says, “Very truly I tell you...before Abraham was born, I am!” This bold statement points directly back to the OT book of Exodus and highlights our understanding of exactly who Jesus is; He is the one true and eternal God of the universe. In John 10:30 Jesus says, “I and the Father are one,” and His opponents picked up rocks to stone Him because they couldn’t accept that He was fully God. But Jesus never backs away from this claim and neither should we.

Now, to be clear, Jesus did humble Himself during His life on earth. He emptied Himself by laying aside His glory for a short time. This is what we read earlier in Philippians 2:7, “he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” He did NOT set aside His deity, but He did set aside His glory, for a time. You might be thinking, “But, wait a second, if Jesus didn’t set aside His deity, then that must mean that God Himself died on the cross for me. Is that what you’re saying Pastor Jerry; that God Himself died for my sins?” Yes, that is exactly what I’m saying: Jesus, who is fully God, died on the cross for our sins.⁴ In fact, Jesus’ divine status makes Him the perfect sacrifice for sin. His sacrifice is powerful and effective in removing sin’s offense between God and people, because of the caliber of the One who died. “God Himself came to be our Savior. Isn’t it amazing to think that he would love you and me that much?”⁵

This sacrifice is why we believe this second thing about Jesus:

2. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God. Back in the Old Testament, in Exodus 29:38-39 it says, “This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day: two lambs a year old. Offer one in the morning and the other at twilight.” Sacrificing lambs was one of the main ways that Jews tried to atone for their sins. They would offer lambs up daily as part of the Mosaic system, especially on the Sabbath and on special religious holidays, like the Passover.⁶ During the time of Christ, there were plenty of people looking for a Messiah to come and be their King. But, instead, the Messiah came as a suffering servant. **He came as a Sacrificial Lamb**, which as it turns out, is exactly what we all needed.

That probably sounds pretty strange to some people. “So, you’re telling me that the hero of your faith is a lamb? A cute little cuddly white lamb?” I mean, it sounds nice enough I guess. Kind of warm and fuzzy. But lambs are pretty harmless. I thought that Jesus changed the world. Well, that’s just it. Jesus did change the world and He did it as the Lamb of God. Because of who Jesus is, what He did on the cross on Good Friday makes all the difference for Easter morning.

The only way to really understand Jesus as the “Lamb of God” is to understand the Jewish roots of the Christian Faith. Jesus is “ISRAEL’S promised Messiah.” That’s why at Christmastime we celebrate His birth by a young Jewish woman, the virgin Mary. But, we need to look back even further into Jewish history to understand Jesus as the Lamb of God. We need to go back to the origins of the Jewish Passover. Way back to Exodus 12:12-13, “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

³ **The Nicene Creed** is the result of centuries of Bible study and godly debate. All the major branches of the Christian Church endorse this statement; Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant. It isn’t a perfect statement, but it does help us in understanding the truth about Jesus as both fully God and fully human. The full statement is #15 in our hymnal: “...We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. [So, Jesus is fully God. The next part clarifies that Jesus is fully human.] For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father...”

⁴ This should not be confused with doctrines such as “patripassionism,” which wrongly teaches that God the Father died on the cross. Jesus, the Person of Christ in the Trinity, is the one who died on the cross. He did this as one who is fully God.

⁵ *Truly God* sermon by Pastor Fred Martin, December 8, 2002, bottom of p. 4.

⁶ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Vol. 3, Gen. Ed. Merrill C. Tenney, Grand Rapids, MI, 1976, p. 860.

Thousands of years ago, God's People were instructed to take a lamb and slaughter it. Then, they took the blood from that lamb and wiped it on the door frame. Then, when the Destroyer came to their doorway, it would turn away, it would PASS OVER them, because of the blood. This sounds strange to our ears, if we are not Jewish, but here's the main point God was making: **we are saved by the blood of the lamb.** 1 Corinthians 5:7 refers to Christ as our Passover Lamb; for both Jews and Gentiles, for all peoples. The day Jesus was crucified was at the time of the Passover Festival. This is why the Last Supper in the Upper Room was a meal that included eating lamb. It's no coincidence that the time on the calendar for the Passover meal, was the same time on the calendar that Jesus, the Lamb of God, died on the cross. 1 Peter 1:19 says that we are saved, "...with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." Jesus is the perfect, sinless Sacrificial Lamb that we needed in order to be rescued from death. You see, in Exodus 12:5 the Jews were instructed that, "The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect..." The lamb had to be perfect and Jesus was perfect; He never sinned.

Now, one thing that was different about Jesus as the Lamb of God compared to all the other lambs that were slaughtered is that Jesus had a choice in the matter. In John 10:18, Jesus says that no one took His life from Him, but rather he said, "I lay it down of my own accord." Jesus wanted to save us from death and from God's wrath so he willingly gave His life for us. He is a kind and gentle Savior who was obedient even unto death. He carried out His Heavenly Father's plan to rescue mankind.

Another thing that is different about Jesus as the Lamb of God is that His one sacrifice took care of all sin for all time. As we mentioned earlier, up until the time of Christ, lambs were being slaughtered every day by the priests. (Adding up to hundreds and thousands of lambs over the years.) Back in Exodus 12:3-4 we read, "Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat." But, in Jesus, just one very special lamb was needed. In other words, God the Father decided that the amount of lamb needed for the whole world was just one.

And this sacrifice just needed to happen one time. Hebrews 10:11-12, 14, 18 says that, "Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God...For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy...And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary." Jesus' sat down because His work was finished. His death took care of our sin problem once and for all.

Let me share one more thing that was different about Jesus as the Lamb of God compared to all the other lambs that were slaughtered. And this is by far one of the coolest things you can know about Jesus. Watch this! **Jesus is not just a Sacrificial Lamb...Jesus is a Victorious Lamb!** On Easter, He arose victorious and He conquered death! The fact that Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday confirms without a doubt that God accepted His payment for our sin; His wrath was satisfied. And, after the Risen Christ appeared to hundreds of people, He then ascended to sit at the right hand of God. Jesus now sits in a VERY powerful position. And from this position of power, he empathizes with us because He knows what it's like to live like one of us; He's done it. He fully empathizes with our human situation. Do you see how good that is for us? The One seated in this powerful position understands and cares about our needs. Hebrews 2:17-18 says, "For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Hebrews 4:14-15 says, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in

every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.” Jesus is rooting for us. He is advocating on our behalf;⁷ giving voice to our concerns because He understands our weakness.

Jesus is a Victorious Lamb! But couldn't God have picked something cooler like a T-rex or something? “Jesus, the Tyrannosaurus of God.” No. In this case, it needed to be a lamb. But don't make the mistake of thinking it was a weak or harmless lamb. That's not accurate. Revelation 17:14 says that in the last days, “They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.” It's not what you know; it's WHO you know! It turns out that the Victorious Lamb of God, is greater than any T-rex we might imagine.



We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

Revelation 5:12-13 says, “In a loud voice they were saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” Amen.

This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji
on April 16, 2017 by Pastor Jerry Johnson.

⁷ 1 John 2:1 says, “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” We have an Advocate who is strong and mighty! He conquers death and He brings victory over sin in our lives.