

Making Much of Jesus

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[0 : 00] All right, please take your copy of God's Word and turn to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 3, and join me in prayer. Father, we praise you for this day that we have been granted to come together and study your Word.

I pray, Father, this morning that you will use our frailty and that you will maximize the preaching of your Word by its transforming power to make us more into the image of your Son for your glory. And I pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So as a general habit together here at Christ Family Church, we preach verse by verse, expositionally.

And there's a number of reasons that we do that that I won't get into in their entirety. There have been many faithful preachers throughout history that have done this differently, not always preached in this fashion.

An example of a fairly dogmatic verse-by-verse preacher is John Calvin. In fact, when he was driven out of Geneva for a time, he had left off, I believe he was in the book of Leviticus at the time.

[1 : 06] Forgive me if you know when I'm getting that wrong. Came back a couple of years later, was rehired, so to speak, back at the church that he was leading. And he picked right back up at the verse that he left off at a number of years prior to that.

Charles Spurgeon, said to be the prince of preachers, thought that preaching verse by verse actually quenched the Spirit because a pastor wasn't required to search God for what he would have to say to the people for that week.

And so I always try to find a healthy balance in that. While we preach through a book together, that's kind of the normative pattern, but each week I ask, God, is this what you would have me do? Is this the text before me that I ought to preach to this people this day? And so this week I've been preparing Mark chapter 3, verse 20 through 35, pretty fervently for what's commonly called the unpardonable sin.

How about that for a week before Christmas sermon for you? We get that from verse 29. Jesus says, but this is an eternal sin. And I prepared for it.

[2 : 10] I had it all prepped and ready to go. And guess who changed my mind this morning about preaching such a sermon? So I have half a page of scribbled notes on a piece of notebook paper.

And we're going to look at an entirely different text and text together today. And so I want you to start by turning to Revelation chapter 1, verse 8. And I have to tell you this morning that I come to you to preach with a pretty heavy heart.

I'm grieving a bit in my heart. And the reason for that is last night we attended a great event that Sam's family does every year. Sam's mother's side of the family, she has five siblings.

There's six of them, and they all have kids who now have kids. And so it's quite a troop. I have no idea how many we number in total, but it's a clan to be sure. We call it Puckett Family Christmas, and it's always the Saturday before Christmas.

And last night was that very event. It kind of kicks off the season for us. And there's lots of good food and cute kids in their Christmas sweaters and the like. Presents to go around and things of this nature.

[3 : 15] And in previous years, this has happened, and it happened again last night. There's suddenly a great excitement in the room because a particular jolly character arrives at the house.

who's been hired in the past. This year it was Uncle Buster wearing an elaborate costume. I'm going to speak in code just in case. I don't want to burst any children's bubbles this morning.

I'll let you do that at some point. But you know who I'm talking about. Shows up, and the house just lit up. Adults and children alike.

I mean, just the excitement level in the room went from a 2 to a 10. And all the cameras came out, and everyone was so excited. One of her adult cousins came to me and said, I'm having flashbacks of being a kid.

And then kept on going. I'm like, what is happening in this room right now? It almost seemed as if they were drugged. I mean, really, like the super excitement came on the room.

[4 : 14] And I started out a bit frustrated, just, you know, the kind of typical, this isn't what Christmas is about kind of frustration, which I've experienced in years past at this event. I'll tell you later if you'd like to know.

I'll give you three clear reasons why we ought not do the Jolly Man. But my frustration really quickly turned to sadness. And that's really what I want to talk about today.

Because I realized, and it was when Cademan ran up to me, jumped up on the couch, I was sitting on the back of the couch, came up to me and said, Dad, I just saw Santa Claus. And I went, yeah, buddy. And he hopped down.

And I just, this sadness came over me because that kind of joy is infectious. Like, there's no way. Like, we've been very clear with Cade on this particular issue. And there's no way by what we've been teaching him that he should have been that stoked about it.

But the whole house was really, really excited. I mean, kids who were apparently afraid of this costumed man, creepy-looking guy, were being, like, drugged to go meet him, right?

[5 : 16] Like, kicking and screaming to go see this character. There was much, much excitement. And I realized all in kind of one moment that we as a Christian people, and myself personally, we don't get that excited about Jesus.

That we don't look for opportunities to make much of him in all of the various settings. This was an elaborate costume. I mean, it was well done, right? He had to leave, change, come in, the whole thing.

He planned it out in order to make much of this particular character. And I hadn't even given a thought to that evening to how I was going to make much of Christ with Sam's family, right?

I was going for food and Christmas sweaters and maybe some presents along the way. And we do the same thing with our church. We come together 52, 53, if you count our Christmas Eve service, times a year as a congregation to make much of Christ together.

And we do some things certainly to be deliberate about that. But is it infectious? Do our kids see what we do and go, what is going on in that place? Right?

[6 : 24] And I thought about some of the reasons why that's a challenging thing to do. I don't think it'd be really appropriate for us to hire somebody to dress up as Jesus and show up at our Christmas parties.

I just, that would feel weird to me. So, how do we make much of Christ? And the thing I really came to realize is that we must make much of Him in our preaching.

And I labor to do that, but I don't know that I do that incredibly well. I don't know that people leave here excited about our Savior, right? Wanting to run around. Wanting to be really stoked about who He is.

And so I want to talk a little bit this morning about who He is and why we should celebrate Him properly this year. Christ Himself is God.

We've seen that case made to us already in Mark. He Himself has proclaimed it a number of times. The great accusations that are being railed against Him is that He's speaking blasphemy. Which He would be if He weren't in fact the Lord.

[7 : 26] Revelation 1, verse 8. God the Father says this of Himself, I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come.

The Almighty. In the Greek alphabet, Alpha is A and Omega is Z. Right? There's nothing that existed before me. There's nothing that will exist after me.

I am everything. This is a more elaborate way of Him saying, I am who I am, which is the name He gave to Moses. I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come.

The Almighty. But turn, if you will, to the end of the book of Revelation. Chapter 22, verse 13. And here we see Jesus speaking, and He says, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

In this time of year, we very readily forget that Jesus who came in the form of a baby was in fact God Himself, incarnate amongst us.

[8 : 36] Right? I think sometimes in our minds we celebrate the little baby Jesus. Right? Like we have in our mind the picture in the manger of us standing around inside Northeast Georgia room and we all kind of like take turns holding the baby and pass them on.

Oh, a cute baby. Snap a photo. Right? This was God Himself who came down off His throne and dwelt amongst us. And we can see some encounters.

When we see encounters of the people have with God, they lay prostrate on the ground. One of my favorites is in Exodus chapter 34. Turn there if you will with me. After Moses has gone back up on the mountain for the second time, he comes down the first time and the people are worshiping the golden calf and he breaks the tablets.

He goes back up on the mountain. God gives him tablets once again. Chapter 34, verse 29. It says, When Moses came down from the Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.

He actually was illuminated. Right? He had a countenance about him that brightened what people were seeing to be true of who he was.

[9 : 57] And we see later in this text that he actually begins to veil himself because this brightness was a fading brightness. So he would veil himself because it was going away and then he would unveil to go meet with the Lord again and he would get bright once again.

And we see some commentary on this in 2 Corinthians 3. Bible drill. Go with me to 2 Corinthians 3. Paul here in 3, verse 6 has talked a bit about the law itself.

This law that Moses brought down on these tablets of stone. And it said, For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. And what he means is that the letter, the law itself, simply brings the conviction of sin.

It cannot deliver us from it, but it simply makes us aware that it exists. So the letter kills. And then in verse 7, he says, Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?

For if there is glory in the ministry of condemnation, condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed, in this case, once once had glory has come to have no glory at all because of the glory that surpasses it.

[11 : 15] The glory, the gospel of grace that surpasses the law. Verse 11, For what was being brought to an end came with glory. Much more will what is permanent have glory.

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold. Not like Moses who would put a veil over his face that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end, but their minds were hardened.

For to this day, when they read the Old Covenant, that same veil remains unlifted because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts.

But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed to the same image from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. You see what he's saying there now? Is that we now have this full revelation. We have looked into the face of Christ.

[12 : 16] And as such, we have a greater glory, a surpassing glory. And we don't experience this glowing skin that Moses had going on. But what we do experience is the transformation of our hearts and therefore our actions.

There has to be something that comes out of a devotion to Christ. If we can't worship Christ properly during this season, it's probably because we don't know him that well.

If we know him at all, we don't know him that well. He is a surpassing glory. If you look down in chapter 4, verse 6, Paul writes, For God who said, Let light shine out of darkness.

This all-powerful God who said, Let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

That is who we behold. He is more excellent than anything in this world. Certainly more excellent than Santa Claus.

[13:26] Who is an omniscient judge of some sort. Who hands out rewards to those who have earned it and who punishes those who haven't.

If we are totally honest with our story, none of us are getting any gifts this Christmas at all. But Jesus instead comes and he pours out eternal wrath on those who have stood in opposition to him. The things that are just and do them. But by grace, by grace, not by our works, not by the good things that we could have ever possibly earned, but by grace, he gives to us eternal life.

Reward in him. Adoption into his family. Jesus is more excellent than Santa Claus. What else are your kids into? Probably a million things. We have a lot of young ones in here.

I couldn't think of an analogy with Thomas, the tank engine. But Jesus is more excellent than Superman. Would have been a great character of my day. If you recall some of the Superman movies, there was a movie where he turned the earth backwards and therefore turned back time.

[14:27] You guys remember that one? By his great strength, if you recall, this was a big feat for Superman. He flew around the earth so quickly in the opposite direction that he got it rotating in the other direction.

Jesus holds the earth in its rotation by the power of his word. Superman can't stand against that. Jesus is more excellent than Superman.

In fact, he's the Lord of time. Knows all things from the beginning to the very, very end. Jesus is more excellent than Iron Man.

Who forsook the glory of being God. Came down as a humble servant. It's the opposite of that character we see in the movie, isn't it? He came as a humble servant and emptied himself and served us to the point of death that we might have life in him.

He traded his glory that we might have glory one day. He is more excellent. Why? Why in our homes do our kids love these things and they don't love Christ?

[15:36] The very name of Jesus ought to move us in some way in our hearts. We hear somebody say the name Jesus. Has it become just commonplace to you? Is it blasé in your life?

It ought to perk your ears. It ought to get your heart motivated and open and warm. This One, this Jesus Christ, salvation from God, the Messiah, it should warm us.

It should want us to engage in conversation. It should be the very thing we want to talk about in all places at all times. Turn to Philippians 2. God has given this name to Christ.

Chapter 2, verse 9, Therefore God has highly exalted him, Jesus, and bestowed on him the name that is above every name. So that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

To the glory of God, the Father. Turn to Psalm, chapter 66. So what happens when I scribble notes?

[16:40] You've got to go with me to the text. Psalm 66, beginning in verse 1.

Shout for joy to God, all the earth. Sing the glory of His name. Give to Him glorious praise. Say to God, how awesome are your deeds.

So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. All the earth worships you and sings praises to you. They sing praises to your name. This should be our heart during the Christmas season, and it should be such that it is infectious.

We should look for opportunities, deliberate chances to make much of Christ. Christ. We have such limited time together. As I said before, 53 services that we'll have this next year.

Many of you will get sick. I know I do. You'll go on vacations. So let's give you 48. Times we get to come together into this holy assembly, this thing that has been specifically set apart to honor Christ in.

[17:57] Do we come? Do we even come prepared to do what we do together? Do we simply roll out of bed, hit the car, get here, go through the motion, and take off? Do we really devote time and energy to seeing how it is we can exalt Christ in our meetings together?

And I know you're thinking, that's kind of your job. You put together the service aspect of it. And yes, I agree. It is. And it's a labor that I have got to put my nose to. But you play a part in it as well. The condition of your heart matters. You start coming to this place ready to exalt Christ, you will find yourself exalting Him in all sorts of unique ways. In your meeting beforehand, in your meeting after, in the singing of praises to His name, even just in your listening.

You want sermons to matter and mean something to you? Set your mind to exalting Christ as you come together with the people of God. How are we going to treat Christmas? Those of you with

kids, those of you without kids who may have kids someday, those of you who have some influence over kids in some way.

Are you more excited about Christ than all of the other trappings that come along with Christmas? And those things aren't bad and evil in themselves. I say out-give the world but point people to Christ.

[19:10] I say out-decorate the world but point people to Christ. Out-eat the world but point people to Christ in all of that. Show the world that this is a lesser joy. Right? That it's just a simple, I mean, a tiny, minute shadow of the greater, more excellent joy that is found in Christ.

Let's pray together.