

Fil-Am Community Church

Pastor David Bennett

God Quest Sermon # 5

“THE KING”

Text: John 8:57-59, Mark 14:61-64, 1 Corinthians 15:14-18.

Who do you say Jesus is?

Socrates taught for 40 years, Plato taught for 50, Aristotle taught for 40 years and Jesus taught for only 3 years. Yet the influence transcends the impact left by the combined 130 years of teachings from these men who were among the greatest philosophers of all time.

Jesus **PAINTED** no pictures yet some of the finest paintings of Michelangelo and Leonard Da Vinci reflected their inspiration from him.

Jesus **WROTE** no poetry, but Dante, Milton and scores of the world’s greatest poets were inspired by him.

Jesus **COMPOSED** no music, still musicians like Beethoven, Bach, reached their highest perfection of melody in the hymns, symphonies they composed in his praise.

Every spirit of human greatness has been enriched by this humble carpenter from Nazareth.
- Henry G. Bosch

You could ask the question of a dozen people on the street corner or in a busy mall and get twenty different answers. Who was Jesus?

Who do you say Jesus is?

- “The greatest man who ever lived.”
- “He was a prophet or a preacher.”
- “He was a great teacher.”
- “Jesus? I’m not sure; I think He was a wise man,
- He was a miracle worker.
- “He was the Son of God.”
- “Personally, I don’t think He ever existed.”

- “A philosopher.”
- “A poet.”
- “The Savior of the world.”
- “A simple man.”
- “A complex man.”
- Who can really say?

A dozen people, a dozen different answers. So I guess we can't really know, huh? I mean, everybody's just got to decide for themselves, right?

Well, maybe ... *And maybe NOT!*

That's exactly what we're going to discuss this morning, However, we're not going to rely on opinion, conjecture, fantasy, myth, or legend.

- We're going to consider the evidence that is available to us
- Discuss the conclusions that evidence points to,
- Finally weigh the responses that might be appropriate in light of those conclusions.

Buddha never claimed to be God, Moses never claimed to be Jehovah and Mohammed never claimed to be Allah, and yet Jesus Christ claimed to be the true living God!

Buddha simply said I am a teacher in search of the truth, Jesus said I am the way the truth and the life.

Confucius said I never claimed to be holy, Mohammad even said unless God throws his cloak of mercy over me I have no hope. Jesus said unless you believe in me, you will die in your sins!

Remember just is the only person in all of history that stood flat footed and proclaimed, in John 14:6,

⁶ *Jesus said to him, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life; NO ONE comes to the Father but THROUGH ME.**”*

In recent years, it's become popular in our culture to say that Jesus made His teachings the central issue and **NEVER** claimed to be **God**.

The really important thing, some people say, the real point, is what **JESUS TAUGHT** us about **LOVE** and **PEACE** and **SACRIFICE**.

And there's actually an element of truth in that. After all, Jesus did teach unlike any other person, before or since. And the things He taught *are* important ... and powerful.

But there's a **PROBLEM** with stopping there—it ignores the vast majority of the facts available to us. And I think any responsible seeker after truth would say:

1. I must weigh the available evidence.

Sadhu Sundar Singu used to illustrate the Incarnation mystery in this way. A simple country man was being shown a fine red glass bottle full of liquid; he would be asked b those that saw it what is in the bottle?

Is it wine, brandy, whiskey? He replied questionably that it was filled with milk.

No one believed it because of its rich color? In order to prove his point he had to actually pour some of the milk out. You see the redness of the bottle **HID** the **TRUE** color of the milk.

So he said it was the same with the Lords **HUMANITY**, man saw him tired and hungry, suffering, weeping, and though he was only a man. He was made in the likeness of man, yet he ever is God in human form.

Who do you say Jesus is?

Was he just a Jewish carpenter who was nailed to a piece of wood?

Was he a local magician, casting spells on people and nature?

Or perhaps he was just a good teacher, who taught his disciples the difference between right and wrong, between good and bad.

Jesus is God spelling himself out in a language that man can understand -S.D. Gordon

Who do you say Jesus is?

This was also the question that was on the disciples lips as well.

Luke 8:24-25, NASB

²⁴ They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. ²⁵ And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?"

A little later in verse 27 Jesus encountered a Demon possessed man, that was too strong to be chained to powerful to be subdued. Yet Jesus rebukes the demon and drives him into a herd of swine. The disciples wonder who is this man that even the Demon's obey him.

Who do you say Jesus is?

BEFORE we look at what Jesus said about himself lets first look at what some of the scriptures says about him.

Colossians 2:9 (NASB)

⁹ For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

Hebrews 1:3, (NIV)

³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a

servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

John 1:1 (NASB)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Who do you say Jesus is?

The preponderance of evidence—much of it credible historical evidence—indicates that Jesus **did** claim to be God ...

That claim was central to everything else He said and did. In fact, one of the few unprompted questions Jesus asked His disciples was the question:

“Who do people say the Son of Man [meaning himself] is?” —Matthew 16:13 (NIV)

He didn’t ask, “What are people saying about my teachings?” He asked, “**Who do people say I am?**”

According to the historical record, the record of His words and actions recorded by eyewitnesses and contemporary historians, Jesus repeatedly asserted or implied that He was the unique Son of God, a loaded assertion that did not go unnoticed by the religious leaders of His day.

On more than one occasion, Jesus’ clear assertion of His own **DEITY** caused His fellow Jews to want to stone Him. Once, when He told the Jewish leaders,

John 8:56 (NIV)

“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad” His listeners became indignant:

John 8:57–59 (NIV)

“You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!” “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.”

In the final days prior to Jesus’ death, He made it clear—even before the Jewish “supreme court”—just who He was:

Mark 14:61–62 (NLT)

Then the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” Jesus said, “I AM...”

John 8:19, (NASB)

¹⁹ *“Jesus said if you know me, you know the father. I came from the father, I will tell you the truth, before Abraham was, “I AM.”*

John 10:30, (NASB) ³⁰ *“Jesus said the father and I are one.”*

John 14:9-11(NASB)

⁹ *Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. ¹¹ Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.*

Revelations 1:8 (NASB) ⁸ *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

The central issue of Christianity is not—never has been—the *teachings* of a man called Jesus.....but **Jesus Christ Himself**.

So it will not do to claim that Jesus never claimed to be God ... the facts that are available to us indicate that **HE DID**.

But that leaves us—where?

Who do you say Jesus is?

To answer that question ...

2. I must consider the possible conclusions.

Once we learn from the historical record that Jesus claimed to be more than just a man, that in fact He claimed to be the unique Son of God,

We must ask, **What, then?**

What conclusions could we draw from that?

Just because Jesus *said* He was God doesn't mean He was. In other words, if we accept the evidence that so strongly suggests that Jesus claimed to be God while He lived here on earth, we then are faced with two alternative conclusions:

Either His claims were **TRUE** or they were **FALSE**.

That's pretty simple, right?

Jesus said,

"Before Abraham was born, I am!" —John 8:58 (NIV)

Either that was true ... or it was false. That's simple, but it's not the end of the conclusions we may draw.

Consider what had to have been the case *if Jesus' claims were false*: either He **KNEW** His claims were false, or He **DID NOT** know His claims were false.

If He **KNEW** His claims were false and He made them anyway, what would you call Him? **A LIAR**.

That means you cannot simply call Jesus a "good moral teacher," because it is neither good nor moral to lie.

Worse than that, if He KNEW His claims to be God were false, and He made them anyway, He is an unspeakably evil man, because He deliberately told others their sins were forgiven when they were not AND He told them they could trust Him for their eternal destiny when they could not. No, it will not do to call Jesus a good teacher, because if He KNEW His claims to be God were false and He made them anyway, He was a liar, a deceiver, an evil, immoral man.

Here are a few things to consider if Christ was not raised from the dead.

a. The preaching from the Gospel is in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:14, NASB

¹⁴ *and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.*

The preaching of the apostles would be empty, meaningless, because they proclaimed nothing more than a fairly tale a story of fiction.

b. Our faith is in vain.

Our faith in Christ would also be empty and meaningless, because our faith would be based on a lie, it would be based on make believe not the truth.

c. The Apostles would have been false witnesses.

1 Corinthians 15:15, NASB

¹⁵ *Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.*

They swore that God raised Jesus from the dead.

They claimed to spend 40 days with him after the resurrection.

There is no way they could have been mistaken about this either they told the truth or it was a lie.

Just look at what the disciples went through after the death of Christ and ask yourself was this a cover-up for a lie?

Simon peter was crucified upside down

Andrew was crucified
 James was beheaded
 John was exiled and died of old age
 Matthew speared to death
 Bartholomew was beaten and then crucified
 Philip was crucified
 Thomas was speared to death
 Simon was crucified
 James was stoned to death
 Judas son of James was stoned to death
 Judas suicide by hanging

d. We would still be in our sins.

1 Corinthians 15:17, NASB

¹⁷ *and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.*

It would have been a lunatic, or a liar that dies on the cross, no one would go through that kind of pain and suffering for a lie.

e. Believers would just perish at death.

1 Corinthians 15:18, NASB

¹⁸ *Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.*

Their faith would have been in a false Messiah, they would have no atonement for their sins, and dying in their sins they would have no hope.

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that the **RESURRECTION** of Christ is **FOUNDATIONAL** to Christian faith. In short if Christ had not been raised from the dead, what's the point?

But that's not the only conclusion we may draw from the available evidence.

Maybe He did not KNOW His claims were false. So ... if He did NOT know His claims were false, what would you call that? If He claimed to be God, but He wasn't—but He THOUGHT He was—what would you call Him? A LUNATIC. In order to believe that Jesus claimed to be God but was wrong and did not know He was wrong, you must conclude that He was *deluded* ... and not mildly so.

Philosopher Peter Kreeft comments on this possibility, saying:

A measure of your insanity is the size of the gap between what you think you are and what you really are. If I think I am the greatest philosopher in America, I am only an arrogant fool. ... If I think I am a butterfly, I am fully embarked from the sunny shores of sanity. But if I think I am God, I am even more insane, because the gap between anything finite and the infinite God is even greater than the gap between any two finite beings, even a man and a butterfly.

Could Jesus have been that crazy?

He would have to have been if He falsely claimed to be God and *did not know* His claim was false. But such a conclusion explodes, obliterates, the boundaries of credibility.

If you have read the historical record, the Gospels,

- you cannot read the **CALM AUTHORITY** of His precepts
- the **LOFTY** consistency of His **CHARACTER**
- the **WISE** and **PRACTICAL NATURE** of His teachings
- the canny, **SAVVY**, clever quality of His **DIALOGUES** with the authorities
- the **SIMPLE** yet poetic phrases He used,
- the **INSIGHT** into human nature He demonstrated,
- the **PERSUASION** He exercised,
- the **GRACE** He exhibited.

Fortunately ... that is not your last option. There is another possibility. Remember, we said either His claims were **TRUE** or they were **FALSE**. If they were false, Jesus was either a liar or a lunatic. But what if they were true?

What would you call Him then? That would make Him ... **LORD!**

If His claims are true, He is:

John 1:14 (NIV)

The Word became flesh. ... We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

He is:

Colossians 1:15 (NIV)

... The image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

He is:

John 6:35. ³⁵ *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.*

John 8:12. ¹² *Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."*

John 10:9. ⁹ *I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

John 10:11. ¹¹ *"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.*

John 11:25. ²⁵ *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,*

John 14:6. ⁶ *Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

John 15:1. ¹ *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

This is a story told by Daniel Webster when he was in the prime of his manhood. He was dining with a company of literary man in Boston and during the dinner the conversation turned upon the subject of Christianity. Mr. Webster frankly stated his belief in the divinity of Christ and his dependence upon the atonement of his savior.

One gentleman said to him Mr. Webster can you comprehend how Christ could be both God and man? Mr. Webster promptly replied "No Sir" I cannot comprehend it. If I could comprehend him, he would be no greater than myself. I feel I am in need of as Super Human Savior.

All of which leads us to our final point for consideration:

3. I must make an appropriate response.

C. S. Lewis was right, in his classic book *Mere Christianity*, when he wrote,

Either [Jesus] was, and is, the Son of God: or else a mad man or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

There you have it. The only conclusion that makes sense in light of the evidence is exactly what the New Testament proclaims:

... God sent his Son, born of a woman ... —Galatians 4:4 (NIV)

... yet was without sin. —Hebrews 4:15 (NIV)

... bore our sins in his body on the [cross] ... —1 Peter 2:24 (NIV)

... to bring you to God. —1 Peter 3:18 (NIV)

That is why the events of His life—and death, and resurrection—were recorded for you. As John the Gospel writer explained:

John 20:31 (NIV)

These [accounts] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

You see, the point of Jesus' conversation with Peter is the point of His prodding and poking around your heart right now, today. ... The point is *not* who others say Jesus is.

The point is who do **YOU** say He is?

Who do **YOU** say He is?

You may want to call Jesus a good teacher not because it fits the evidence, but because it gets you out of a dilemma. For if Jesus is Lord—and He is—we face a choice, the same choice posed by Pilate:

“What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?” —Matthew 27:22 (NIV)

Remember either Jesus is Lord of All or not Lord at all....

It Depends on Who’s Hand it’s in

A basketball in my hands is worth about \$20
 A basketball in Michael Jordan’s hands is worth about 33 Million
 It all depends on who’s hands it’s in

A baseball in my hands is worth about \$6
 A baseball in Mark McGuire’s hands is worth about 19 Million
 It all depends on who’s hands it’s in

A Volleyball in my hands is worth about \$15
 A Volleyball in Gene or Gils hands is priceless
 It all depends on who’s hands it’s in

A rod in my hands will keep away wild animals
 A rod in Moses hands will part the Red Sea
 It all depends on who’s hands it’s in

A slingshot in my hands is a kid’s toy
 A slingshot in Davids hand is a mighty weapon for the Lord
 It all depends on who’s hands it’s in

Nails in my hands might produce a birdhouse
 Nails in Jesus hand will produce Salvation for the entire word
 It all depends on who’s hands it’s in

Who do you say Jesus is?

If you're here as a skeptic or seeker this morning, you have a choice ... God leaves it up to you. You can weigh the facts and consider the alternatives and decide, "Nah ... I don't argue with the evidence, but I don't really want to give in to it either."

You can do that. That's your choice to make. BUT you can also choose to call out to Him in prayer and surrender to Him and let Him change your life, as He has so many others, including many in this room...

All you have to do is give in, you can do that by stepping up today and making that commitment to meet Jesus and take him home with you.

You need to acknowledge Jesus today, not only with my mind but with my heart.

Thank You for being born of a woman, for living a sinless life, for bearing my sin when you died on the cross to bring me to God.

I ask your forgiveness and accept your sacrifice in exchange for all the wrong things I've done. I turn my life over to your control and ask you to take charge from now on. In Jesus' name, amen."

Now, if you've ready to make that change, if you are sick and tired of being sick and tired, don't leave here today the same as you came. Take Jesus with you. He is right hear waiting to come into you, he will not force the door open but he is standing there patiently waiting on you to take that first step.

What's holding you back? Don't let the Devil keep you from receiving your blessing!

Who do you say Jesus is?

His Holy Spirit speaking to your heart **TODAY** and convicting you, **URGING** you to repent, to recommit, to renew your walk with Him, your devotion to Him, your dedication to him.

Jesus is standing up here waiting for you; the **FIRST STEP** is the hardest, after that first step the Holy Spirit will take over but the first step is up to you.

If you are home reading this just say the following prayer and feel the change it will make in your life.

“Jesus, I confess my neglect, my lukewarmness, my half-heartedness. Forgive me for ever giving you less than all, for taking Your grace for granted. Please come to my heart anew right now, rekindle my first love, and grant me the grace to follow you wholeheartedly, unreservedly, from this moment forward. Amen.”