

Fil-Am Community Church

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Key verses: John 14:6; Acts 4:10–12; 1 Corinthians 15:3–6

“Jesus”

Good morning! Nice to back from my hibernation. Thanks to those who prayed for me. I got knocked down by a bad cold for a few days but I thank God that I’m quite all right today.

I recently saw an advertisement for a product that was marketed as “must-have.” Companies use this language to advertise their latest and greatest products. There are must-have clothes, must-have shoes, must-have accessories, and must-have apps for your smart phone or iPad.

But must-haves extend beyond the world of merchandise. People have must-haves about other people. Employers have must-have lists for new and potential employees. Graduates have must-have lists for potential jobs. And of course, the most infamous must-have list comes from the world of relationships. Men have must-haves about women, and women have must-haves about men. I just read an article about three pieces that every woman must have in her jewelry box. They are 1. Diamond Studs; 2. Personalized Charm Necklace; and 3. Right Hand Diamond Ring. Is that correct, women? Some men are thinking, “In your dreams”.

Must-haves are essentials. Must-haves are non-negotiables. Our relationship with Jesus includes must-haves, essentials, non-negotiables.

We are in the third week of a series called ***Foundations***. In this series, we are talking about the core beliefs of our faith, what is essential to our identity as Christians. These core beliefs are the essentials, the non-negotiables, the must-haves of our faith. These beliefs are what distinguish us as Christians, what separate us from the myriads of belief systems that are out there in the world.

You see, it can be confusing if you think about it. There are literally hundreds of religions in the world.

And add to that the hundreds of sects and cults that are also in existence. In Christianity alone, there may be hundreds of denominations and each one offers a different kind of flavor and taste, so to speak. I've been into a few of these religions and denominations in the past, in and out of them. I was one confused fella, you know. I dabbled with eastern religions, then got involved in western religions, until I settled down with southern religions that's why I'm now a Southern Baptist.

Kidding aside, what we're aiming to do here in this series is to be grounded in our faith by looking at some of the fundamental doctrines that God teaches us in his Word. Now, don't be afraid of doctrine. It is not a kind of medicine like Motrin or Excedrin. Doctrine, to put it simply, is an organized

summary of what the Bible teaches about the most important issues of life. Doctrinal truth meets our deepest needs. It is both practical and relevant and, more importantly, helps us in our Christian walk. As Paul says in Ephesians 4:14, *“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.”*

Two weeks ago, we started with the Doctrine of the Bible. Last week, Pastor Dave continued with the Doctrine of the Godhead. Today, we’ll look at the Doctrine of Jesus.

First, let’s look at this video.

VIDEO – Who is Jesus?

Different people have different notions about Jesus. Even when he walked on this earth, people were confused as to his true identity. Once when Jesus took his disciples on a retreat to a place called Caesarea Philippi, he asked them, *“Who do people say that I am?”* They offered four responses: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets (see Matthew 16:13-16).

Now, which answer will you give? Two thousand years have passed and still we wonder about the man called Jesus.

That takes us back to Caesarea Philippi. After Jesus asked for the opinions of others, he turned to his men and asked for their answer: “But you, who do

you say that I am?" In the end, each of us faces the same question. We can't get away with quoting the opinions of others. You have to make up your own mind.

So let's go back to the original question. Who is Jesus Christ? And how does your answer stack up with the Bible? That's an important second question because it is not enough to say, "I believe in Jesus." Millions of people claim to believe in Jesus who don't have a clue about what the Bible says about him. Which Jesus do you believe in?

Today I want to walk through some "only Jesus" statements to remind us of the person and work of Jesus Christ and his relevance to our lives.

I. Only Jesus is the God-Man

The first thing we need to know about Jesus is what his nature is. From the time of his birth until now, the nature and person of Jesus is being debated. In the early history of the Christian Church, during the fourth and fifth centuries, this was certainly the case. The controversies surrounding the person of Christ seemed to crop up like weeds in a garden. Across the Roman Empire, which by this time had embraced Christianity, different teachers were teaching different doctrines about who Jesus was.

Let me give you a few examples.

There was Docetism, from the Greek word dokeo, which means "to think" but can also mean "to seem." Docetists taught that Jesus merely seemed to be in the flesh. They affirmed the Divinity of Christ, but denied His humanity. They said His human body was nothing more than a phantasm, or ghost, and that His sufferings and death were mere appearance.

Very close to them in their belief about the person of Christ, and probably the most dangerous of all early heresies, was Gnosticism. Gnostics' beliefs were rooted in a dualism that said all things spiritual were good, and all material things were evil. Thus they denied the incarnation. They didn't believe that God became man because flesh was evil.

Then, there was Nestorianism, which taught that Jesus was sort of schizophrenic, that is that He was two different persons living in one body. Now, I'm sure our friend here, Nestor, is not a follower of this teaching. Then, of course, there was the widespread heresy of the Arians. Arius was a teacher and preacher who lived in the third and fourth centuries and was a pastor in Alexandria, Egypt. He claimed that Christ was a created being. His teaching is called Arianism. The problem with this teaching is that if Christ is a created being, then He is not God, if He is not God then He was not who He claimed to be and could not do what He claimed He came to do. If He was not 100-percent God and 100-percent man, then He could not be the sacrifice for our sins.

Today, these teachings can be found in some pseudo-Christian groups and religions and cults. For instance, the Mormons, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, deny the uniqueness of Christ's divinity. While they will say that Jesus is a son of God, they would go on to say that he was simply one of many sons, including themselves, teaching that they are sons of God, just like Jesus was. This leads to their false teaching that all of us can become gods just like Jesus.

The Jehovah's witnesses also **deny the Deity of Christ**, claiming that Jesus was a created being and is actually the archangel Michael. And the Christian Scientists will teach about His divinity but deny His humanity. In the Philippines, the **Iglesia ni Cristo, or Church of Christ**, deny that Jesus is God and believes that he is just a man. It seems the devil is telling the same old lies, he's just put them in new packages. As Solomon said, there is nothing new under the sun.

All these teachings are false. The Bible is clear that Jesus is God and man at the same time. He is not, as some would say, half God and half man. He is fully God and fully man. Jesus has two natures, one divine and one human, and yet, He is one Person. According to John 1:1, Jesus is the Word who was God, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* This means that in the single person of Jesus Christ these two natures both existed.

It is important to recognize that the divine nature of Jesus was not changed. It was not altered. He is not merely a man who "had God within Him" nor is he a man who "manifested divine qualities." He is God, second person of the Trinity.

Hebrews 1:3 puts it this way, *"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."* Jesus' two natures are not "mixed together," nor are they combined into a new God-man nature. They are separate yet act as a unit in the one person of Jesus.

Folks, this is one of the foundational doctrines of our faith. **Only Jesus is fully God and fully human.** We confess him to be the Second Person in the Trinity. Therefore, he is not just another teacher or prophet. He is God who became one of us. Now, that he is in heaven, he still is God and man at the same time. This, then, tells us something incredible about God: God understands us and our condition. The fact that he became man in the person of Jesus Christ tells us he cares deeply for us.

Sometimes we think God is far away, too busy to care about our day-to-day lives. But Jesus reminds us that is a lie. God loves us enough to have become a human. He had a real body. He had real feelings. He had parents. He experienced real pain. He faced real hardship. He didn't live a human life

from a distance. He drew close. He moved into the neighborhood. He became one of us.

Some of you have been in long-distance relationships in the past. I once tried a long-distance relationship.

I was 30 years-old and my girlfriend was one year my junior and we were in the Philippines. A few months into our relationship, I accepted an offer to work in Australia and I asked my girlfriend to come with me but she didn't come. So I went and our communication only was by phone. No emails or IM's or texting during that time. We talked on the phone almost every day until I realized that my phone bill every month was too much and I decided to end the relationship. Of course, that wasn't the real reason. The point is, our God does not do long-distance relationships. That's why He has come close to us in the person of Jesus, and there is no other God like this. When you ask Muslims, even though they call Allah as the merciful and compassionate one, they know that he is distant, far-off, uncaring. Jesus, our God, cares for you and is close to you. He is fully God and fully man.

This brings us to the second point. Although Jesus is fully man,

II. Only Jesus led a perfect human life

Do you know any man who did not sin or does not sin? Even pastors sin! I read the story of these three pastors who attended a convention and were all sharing one room. The first pastor said, “Let’s confess our secret sins one to another. I’ll start – my secret sin is I just love to gamble. When I go out of town, it’s cha-ching cha-ching, let the machines ring.”

The second pastor said, “My secret sin is that I love to drink. I just can’t avoid alcohol. That bag has all my bottles.”

The third pastor said, “My secret sin is gossiping and, oh boy, I just can’t wait to get out of this room!”

Well, these three pastors couldn’t resist temptation. Just like all of us. We easily succumb to temptation. We easily sin. But not Jesus. He did not gossip. He was not greedy. He did not curse his neighbor.

He did not entertain lustful thoughts. He did not cheat or deceive or take advantage of other people. In fact, he paid his taxes. Only Jesus led a sinless life.

The Bible teaches clearly that Jesus was entirely free from sin. ¹ Peter 2:22 says, “*He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.*” Also, in ¹ John 3:5b, it says, “...in him is no sin.”

Now, why was Jesus sinless? The obvious answer is that Jesus was born of a virgin. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, not by any human being. Mary his mother was just used as an instrument to carry the baby Jesus for nine months.

The not-so-obvious answer or answers are the following:

First, Jesus' sinlessness was necessary so that on the cross he could be a worthy substitute for sinners. Had he not been "a lamb without blemish or defect," his blood would not have been "precious" in the eyes of God.

1 Peter 1:19 says, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." Remember, in Old Testament times, a lamb without blemish was sacrificed for the sins of the Israelites. In the New Testament which includes our present day, Jesus is the perfect lamb of God who takes away the sins of humankind. If Jesus wasn't sinless, he would have needed a savior himself, and his death could not have redeemed us from eternal judgment.

Second, the righteousness of Christ actually makes believers righteous before God. Not only are believers forgiven of their sins through Christ's atonement, but they actually become the righteousness of God. *2Co 5:21 says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might*

become the righteousness of God.” This means that when God the Father looks on a sinful believer, it is as if he is looking upon his sinless Son Jesus. The righteousness of Jesus becomes our own righteousness.

Third, Jesus faced and overcame temptation to become our sympathetic high priest before the Father in the heavenly places. Hebrews 4:15 says, *“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.”* Thus, he can relate to us. He can sympathize with us. He knows what you’re going through. He knows your struggles, your pain, the stresses that you feel. And he doesn’t condemn you. You always fail and hate yourself because of it? Jesus doesn’t hate you. He loves you. And he wants you to overcome that evil desire, that wicked weakness of yours more than you do. Because he is interested in you becoming like him. It will require a lot of prayer and effort and help and grace from God. But, be assured that because Jesus went through it, he will be with you because he knows the way out.

This leads us to our third point. We’ve talked about sin. We all want to overcome sin. Only Jesus can help us because he did not sin. And, I’m sure everyone of us would like to overcome death. No one wants to die. We all want to live forever. That’s possible because of Jesus. For

III. Only Jesus has conquered death

Only Jesus was raised from the dead. If you go back to the time of the first century, Jesus was not the only person whom people believed could be the Messiah, the one whom God would send to liberate Israel from Roman oppression. Scholars think there may have been five or six messiah candidates who lived within 100 years of Jesus' life. There were certain patterns to these messiah candidates. They all called people to deepen their practice of faith. They all believed God would restore Israel's freedom. Can anyone guess what happened to all of those so-called messiah candidates? They all died. They ended up either being killed by the Roman government or by some rival faction.

If your messiah was killed, you had two options: you could either join a local dead-messiah recovery group, or you could go find yourself a new and better messiah, because following a dead messiah meant you were following the wrong messiah. It was a contradiction in terms.

So when Jesus—the one whom many believed was the true Messiah—was arrested, convicted, executed, and buried, what do you think his followers thought? They thought they were following the wrong guy. If he's not the messiah, it does not matter that he modeled great compassion and sacrifice. When Jesus died, his disciples fled and hid. They were devastated. They lost their friend and they lost their hope.

But something remarkable happened, and we can read about it in the historical records. The same people who watched Jesus die began to gather together again, but they did not gather to tell old stories for old times' sake.

They left their occupations, they sold their possessions, and they devoted the rest of their lives to one simple message: Jesus died on a cross, he was buried in a tomb, and on the third day he was raised to life. They even saw him and talked with him. They touched him and ate meals with him.

Listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:3–6:

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep..”

Paul is essentially saying: If you don't believe me, if you don't buy this, you can go talk to all these people who have seen him, who have talked to him. Jesus was raised from the dead. He is not like the dead “messiahs” that came and went. He is the one and only resurrected Messiah. Thus Jesus is far different from any other religious leader in history.

The resurrection is also one of the cornerstone doctrines of our faith.

Without the resurrection, our faith is in vain as the apostle Paul says. He writes in 1 Cor. 15:17, *“If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins.”*

So, Jesus conquered death. To conquer is to lord over. And in this whole universe,

IV. Only Jesus is Lord

Only Jesus is Lord. But what does that mean? After the resurrection, Jesus' followers began talking about him in a very particular way. They did not simply address him as Jesus; they called him Lord Jesus. You might wonder why that is significant. It is not simply a term of respect. This word occurs many times in the New Testament, and it was also common throughout the Roman Empire. Its basic meaning is "absolute ruler." To call Jesus "Lord" means that he is sovereign over the entire universe, and he has the right of sovereign rule over you and me.

Romans 10:9 says 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."*

Notice how simple that phrase is—"Jesus is Lord." To confess with the mouth means more than simply saying the words. It means to agree from the heart that you believe what you are saying. In order to understand this properly, we need a bit of background on how the Romans ruled their vast empire. Because the empire stretched from Europe into the Middle East and across the northern coast of Africa, it encompassed many provinces and thus included many local religions. Scholars speak of the "mystery religions" that were found in many parts of the empire.

Each of the various religions has its own code of conduct, its own sacred scriptures, its own pattern of worship, form of sacrifice, sacred rites, priesthood, and so on. Because these religions tended to keep people pacified, the Romans left them alone as much as possible. Rome required only that taxes be paid and that everyone be required to say, “Caesar is Lord.” That’s all—just three simple words. Say “Caesar is Lord,” and then go on about your business. Affirm that Caesar was sovereign and then follow whatever religion suited you. For many people in the Empire, that was no big burden. But Christians steadfastly refused to say, “Caesar is Lord.” They simply wouldn’t say it. How could they say, “Caesar is Lord” when their faith taught them that “Jesus is Lord?” They could not and would not deny Christ. And that is why during the days of persecution, Christians were slaughtered, murdered by the thousands, crucified, burned at the stake, run through with the sword, and thrown to the wild animals. This was the great dividing line that Christians would not cross.

Chuck Colson notes that in the first century, if you stood in a public gathering and cried out, “Jesus is God!” no one would be upset. But if you shouted, “Jesus is Lord!” you would start a riot. Let us be crystal-clear about this. Rome did not persecute Christians because they believed in the deity of Christ, or that Jesus was the promised Messiah, or that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. Rome did not kill Christians because they said Jesus is the only way of salvation. Those were “religious beliefs” that did not threaten the state. But when Christians declared, “Jesus Christ is our Lord,

and there is no other!” that was a direct attack on Caesar-worship, and thus punishable by death.

That is why the Lordship of Christ matters so much. To call him “Lord” means that we surrender all we have to him, and we follow him gladly wherever he leads, whatever it costs.

There was a time I didn’t believe in Jesus as my real Lord. I was a Jehovah’s Witness. I may have called Jesus “Lord Jesus” but I believed in a different Jesus. The reason is that, like any other Jehovah’s Witness, I don’t believe that Jesus was God. Only Jehovah, his father, was God.

Then, I came across a book that refuted every major teaching of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. I was skeptical, of course, about all the arguments that the author put forth to debunk these teachings. As I progressed through the book, however, my skepticism turned to confusion. Somehow, his words were making sense especially when I compared them with what the Scripture said. Then, I reached the part of the book which talked about the deity of Christ. Jehovah’s Witnesses object strongly to this teaching. I myself believed that we had an airtight case against it and so I thought that this was the book’s major flaw. Yet, as I read on, I found out that my objections were falling like dominoes. And when the author quoted Philippians 2:10-11, “that at 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,” I broke down and cried. You know why? It’s

because this passage is quoted from Isaiah 45:23 where God is saying, “By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.” And here, in Philippians, the apostle Paul applies this same passage to Jesus, “that at 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”...and the logical conclusion...Jehovah. Jehovah of the Old Testament is Jesus of the New Testament! Jesus is God! I then surrendered my life to Jesus and made him my Lord and Savior. And I never regretted that decision since.

There is no one like Jesus. There is no one who can do what Jesus does. Some of us have been in or around the church for a long time. Some of you love the songs, you love the stories, and we know you especially love the food.. and fellowship. Amen? But sometimes we lose sight of why we are here, why we came in the first place. We lose sight of what we need most: a relationship with Jesus. Which brings us to our fifth and final point

V. Only Jesus can give you a relationship with God

Only Jesus offers us a relationship with a loving God. God becomes personal because of Jesus. Other religions tell you to do this and do that and, perhaps, you can be accepted by God. Offer sacrifices, recite a creed, do good things and you earn merit points so can go to heaven. But Jesus says, “No, don’t do all this. I’ve done it for you. I died on the cross for you. I came down from heaven to save you.”

Jesus is not just your way to find God; he is God who has come to find you. He has come to find you today, no matter what you bring into this place, no matter what is going on in your life. Jesus finds us in dark and messy places, like doubt and depression. He finds us in places filled with sin and shame. But Jesus is the one God who says, "I love you. I want to be with you so much that I'd rather die than lose you." That is why Jesus came. That is why he took the cross on his back. That is why he walked up that hill called Calvary and gave his life for you. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Will you make him your king and your Lord today?

Let us pray.....