

Why Are We Still Talking About Jesus After All This Time?

Luke 18:31-34, Matthew 20:17-19, Mark 10:32-34

Good morning, men. We have been in this series called “Hanging Out With Jesus” for over five years. During that time we have taken breaks a couple of times in the year for other small series. If I kept accurate records this message this morning this is number 142 in this series. During this series we have gone through about 70% of the gospel stories in chronological order. Some of you may be wondering why are we still talking about Jesus? Why are we still hanging out with Jesus? Why are we still in this series? That is the title of the talk this morning, “Why Are We Still Talking About Jesus After All This Time?”

I am going to go ahead and give you the big idea this morning to start out. I have for years said that if I could pick one sentence to describe my life it would be this one: because God is good my life has not turned out like I planned.

This year, I have added a second sentence and it is going to be our big idea this morning. I am going to give it to you for you to consider adopting it. It doesn't have to be like a life statement for you, but to make this idea your own. Here is the big idea for today. **My worst day with Jesus has been infinitely better than my best day without Him.**

I hadn't thought about this until this morning when I was preparing. You know how the Spirit does things? Psalm 84:10 popped into my mind. Better is one day in His courts than a thousand elsewhere.

Let's take a look at our text. It is a very short text. The reason I want to focus on this passage is because this is the third time that Jesus now has predicted His death. We have not really parked on that in previous messages; we have referenced it, but not parked on it. I want to park on it this morning. Luke 18:31. “Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, ‘We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.’”

The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them and they did not know what He was talking about. Jesus is so interesting to me because He is probably the most well-known human being who has ever lived and probably at the same time, the most misunderstood human being that's ever lived.

BECAUSE HE WANTS TO CONFIDE IN US

Let's take a look and see what we can pull out of this text. The first thing we see is He took the Twelve aside and when we asked the question why are we still talking about Jesus is because He wants to confide in us. He took the Twelve aside, and He wants to confide in us. He confides in us through His Word which we look at here each week through His Spirit. In so many other

ways, it is the works of God in Creation, which I have taken a long look at myself in the last few weeks.

We see that Jesus wants to hang out with us. John 15:15 says, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." Just so there is no mistake, keep your finger here, but turn with me to John 17:20-21. Everything that is written in the Scriptures for the disciples is also written for us. "My prayer is not for them alone." He is talking about His present disciples. "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you."

The Scriptures have been written for us today. Jesus wants to be with us. Isn't it fascinating we have the most well-known, the most admired, the most influential man who has ever lived, and He wants to confide in you? He wants to take you aside, and He wants to take His life with you. Remarkable. Can you remember someone who was extremely important, somebody you really looked up to and respected? It might have been a parent, your father, a coach, a teacher or maybe after you got into the work world, maybe it was an employer. Somebody who had their act so together they were just everything you wanted to be. And that person took you aside one day and began to confide in you and told you something about how you could be the man you wanted to be, or maybe even told you something personal. Remember how you felt with that? Jesus wants to do that with us everyday. The reason we are still talking about Jesus is because He is willing to talk to us.

In my wallet, I have a list of different things. The reason I have it there is if I am someplace and I get called to talk, I can quickly look this over and think of something I can say. On this list, among other things, I have a list of those times when Jesus has taken me aside. I counted them last night.

Jesus takes you aside in different ways. There is the first order of taking you aside, which is just like everyday. Everyday you get with God, read your Bible, you are praying, and you have this sense of His presence. That is the first order of confiding and taking you aside. Then there are those second order, higher level kinds of taking aside.

For example, I can remember sitting in my backyard and just trying to experience the presence of Jesus. There was a hush over the neighborhood. It was 4A.M. There was a quiet; a calm. I live on a lake and the lake was like glass. It was extremely quiet. I could hear owls and the chameleons running around. It was so quiet you could hear anything. All of a sudden, it happened. There was this heavy sense of the presence of the person of Jesus. Suddenly I was enveloped in the presence of Jesus. He took me aside and He showed me things.

On a different occasion I remember once doing the same thing in my backyard. I was looking across the lake at the lights in the different houses. Suddenly God, Jesus, showed me how to reach our entire city for Jesus Christ. He took me aside and gave me a vision of how to reach the whole city. Then the veil closed back and honestly I can't remember the vision. But I could see it at the time. It was a very real experience with Jesus. He took me aside.

The reason we are still talking about Jesus is because He wants to talk to us. But if we are not talking with Him and about Him, we are not going to have these incredible experiences.

The big idea today here is this: **My worst day with Jesus has been infinitely better than my best day without Him.** Are you able to say that yet, and to believe that and to really know that this is the reality and the truth? Napoleon said (one of my favorite quotes), “I died before my times and my body shall be returned to the earth and devoured by worms. What an abysmal gulf between my deep miseries and the eternal kingdom of Christ. I marvel that where the ambitious dreams of myself and of Alexander and of Caesar should have vanished into thin air, a Judean peasant—Jesus—should be able to stretch his hands across the centuries, and control the destinies of men and nations.”

Napoleon got it. Napoleon understood. Even beyond all his accomplishments, he could see this abysmal gulf between his great accomplishments and Christ. **My worst day with Jesus has been infinitely better than my best day without Him.**

BECAUSE OF WHAT HE DID FOR US

The first reason we are still talking about Jesus is because He wants to confide in us. The second reason is because of what He did for us. Looking back at the text, He took the Twelve aside and told them we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the son of man will be fulfilled.

What did He confide in them? All the things that have been prophesied about Jesus. This is Josh McDowell’s book, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Josh has been a friend of mine for a long time. If you have anybody who is a layman and has doubts about Christianity and their faith, this is a wonderful book for them to take a look at. It is also a great resource for Christians, just to see all the different reasons, all the different evidences and proofs for the existence of God and Jesus. He goes into great detail about these prophecies.

There are approximately 300 fulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament about Jesus. There are approximately 100 prophecies that could only be fulfilled through Jesus. It was impossible for them to be fulfilled any other way with the diversity of these prophecies such as a virgin birth, and coming out of Nazareth and so forth. I am not a mathematician so I can’t vouch for it, but it sounds pretty fantastic to me. He says the possibility of just eight prophecies being true, being fulfilled in the same person, would be one times 10^{17} . Or take silver dollars, and cover the state of Texas with silver dollars to a height of two feet. Now take one of those silver dollars and put an “X” on it, and then take a man and put a blindfold on him, and tell him to go pull out that one silver dollar. He said the chances that the man with the blindfold would be able to go into Texas covered two feet with silver dollars, and find the single coin would fulfill just eight of these prophecies. Those are the odds – to fulfill just eight of these. And over three hundred prophecies about Jesus have been fulfilled. Jesus said everything that was written by the prophets about the son of man will be fulfilled. Notice that none of the things He is getting ready to talk about had happened yet.

The things that Jesus tells them next are the things that are still to come. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him, insult Him, spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him. Read Isaiah 53 sometime if you haven’t before about the description of Jesus the suffering servant. Then it says on the third day, He will rise again.

There are a lot of high words that I have read in my life; you too, no doubt. The highest human words that I ever can remember reading, outside of the Word of God, happened when I was in the Army. I am a high school dropout, but I went to night school in North Carolina. One night I was reading for an English exam, in Shakespeare, Hamlet to be specific. I read this verse: "This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

I remember thinking to myself, Eureka! This is it. This is what I have been looking for. This is the noblest thought I have ever heard uttered in my life. This is worthy of making into a life credo, and so I did. I adopted that verse as my life credo, and on that day I became a moralist, and I decided I would try to do the right thing by every person I met every day. But it is so interesting to me because no higher words had ever been spoken than these words by Shakespeare, or if you took his words or Plato's or anyone else's we do not find anything comparable to the words of the Bible.

Listen to this: "For God so loved the world that He sent His one and only son" (John 3:16) What kind of a nut job would say that? A human. "The son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being sustaining all things by His powerful word (Hebrews 1:3)" Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9) Jesus said, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; No one can snatch them out of my hand. (John 10:28)" Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven. (Mark 2:9)"

Peter got it right. He said to whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life. Why are we still talking about Jesus? Because of what He did for us – His suffering; His death and His resurrection.

I just finished writing a book called, *Is Christianity for You?* All of my other books have been written from the perspective of I've done my homework; you can trust me; here is what you need to know. But *Is Christianity for You* is different. It is written for people who have honest doubts and questions about the Christian faith. In the book I talk about things like is the idea of God logical? If God is good why is there so much suffering? Shouldn't science rule over theology? Can you really stake your life on the Bible being true? In that particular chapter I talk about there are many exposes about Christianity that you read. They all seem to fall in pretty much the same genre of gathering together a bunch of liberal theologians who don't really believe in the Bible and don't really believe in Jesus.

There is one in particular that I watched. It was interesting because when they got to the resurrection they completely trashed the Deity of Jesus. But as a matter of intellectual integrity all of them took pause. None of them were willing to say out and out that the resurrection didn't happen. They wouldn't agree that it did, but they all more or less said something happened – even the disbelievers, the scholars who were not believers. They were all a little befuddled about it. Why did they believe that? They believe it because if it were not true it would be the only time in history that a conspiracy of that magnitude could ever hold together. We see conspiracies being exposed all the time. But a conspiracy of this magnitude that has over one third of the world's population following this man?

Here is what I wrote. "Also if deceivers had intended to devise a false religion they would not have made up such incredible claims such as the resurrection, the Deity of a man and the work

of so many miracles. Nor were they told so much about their own failures, like deserting Jesus in the face of terrible suffering. Nor would eleven of the disciples have gone to their deaths because of a conspiracy. That theory doesn't work even for a nonbeliever."

We are still talking about Jesus because of what He had done for us; the suffering servant who gave His life so we could have eternal life. It is founded on His birth, His death and then His resurrection.

Keep your finger again in Luke and turn to John 5:39. Jesus in this verse says, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." Elsewhere, drop down to Verse 46. "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me."

All the way back to the original author of the 40 or so human authors, Moses, Jesus says, is writing about me, "But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Whether we are talking about the Old Testament or New Testament it all points to Jesus. Jesus says the Scriptures are about Me. The big idea today is this. Because of what He has done for us, I have eternal life. If you are in Christ you have eternal life. No matter what happens to you, no matter what else happens to you, it is going to be infinitely better, than your best day without Him, because no matter what else happens you are going to be with God forever. It is amazing.

BECAUSE HE WANTS US TO UNDERSTAND

Why we are still talking about Jesus because first, He wants to confide in us, second because of what He did for us, and third because He wants us to understand. Go to Luke 18:34. "The disciples did not understand any of this." It seems pretty incredulous to us at this point that they did not understand it. Let's talk about this. Its meaning was hidden from them and they did not know what he was talking about. There are three different ways the Gospel writer Luke is making sure we understand that they did not understand: they didn't understand; its meaning was hidden; they did not know what He was talking about.

Back to this idea that this most influential man who has ever lived, this most well-known man who has ever lived. He is also the most misunderstood person. Why is that? Why did they misunderstand Him? First, these prophecies that are made about Jesus are cryptic. Many of the prophets said that they admitted they didn't know what was going on. The prophecies are cryptic when you are looking forward. They are very clear looking back and having been studied by tens of thousands of theologians over hundreds and hundreds of years.

Almost everybody that lived at that time thought that Jesus was going to come as a warrior, Messiah. He didn't do that. He came as the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world, so there were religious presuppositions and the political agendas that were floating around at the time.

Also, He is hard to understand today because He speaks in parables. We are taking the time to try to understand the parables, but when I am done teaching these parables, are you not as

confused when I started teaching? Of course you are. Because there are many of them that are extremely difficult to understand. Then there is the fact that although we know so much about Jesus and all the Scriptures are about Him, He only gave us 34,450 words. You can take everything Jesus said, all the red letters in the Bible and you can put them into 10 thirty-minute sermons, and that is it.

Jesus was not so easy to understand. Actually, He is not easy to understand now. Also, finally, it is hard to understand someone when you want something other than what they are offering you. Like your wife, if you are married. It is hard to understand somebody who is offering you something when you really want something else.

If you want worldly success, if that is important to you, you are not going to read Jesus. You are not going to understand Jesus. Do you understand what I am saying? If worldly success is what you are looking for, and you are looking for a Rosetta Stone on worldly success in the Bible in the words of Jesus, you are not going to understand Jesus.

If you are looking for happiness and if happiness is your highest value, you are not going to understand Jesus; because Jesus came to call us to holiness, not to happiness. That doesn't mean Jesus doesn't want you to be happy; He does, but as the residue of holiness. Happiness is the residue of holiness. It is not the other way around. Holiness is not the residue of happiness. It is not like you become happy and then you become holy. You become a sanctified man, and then out of the overflow of that from the residue of that, you will be happy. If you are seeking happiness as your highest value you will not understand Jesus. Consider this, if you feel like you don't understand Jesus, ask yourself why not? Is He my highest thought in every situation? Is Jesus Christ my highest and best thought in every situation? Am I trying to figure out how to use Him? Do I really want something else?

Know that Jesus has a plan to help us understand. It is Romans 12:2 and many other verses like it. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2 is a nice little verse to focus in on. To be transformed, and not conformed to the world. By the way, I would call Romans 12:2 hanging out with Jesus.

We are still talking about Him because the more we hang out with Him, the more He confides in us. The more we hang out with Him the more we understand what He did for us. The more we hang out with Him the more we understand Him. If you today find that you are straddling the fence, and over here are your worldly ambitions, and you can feel some weight on wanting to get ahead in the world. I am talking about beyond just the norm. On the other side of the fence, on the other leg, you can feel some weight on the kingdom of God. If you can feel weight on both legs, then you are straddling the fence.

The way that you can get to this thought, that **my worst day with Jesus has been infinitely better than my best day without Him**, is to take all the weight off of that worldly foot. This is crazy. Everybody stand up. This is a crazy idea but I like it. Evenly distribute your weight on both feet. On your right leg, just feel the weight that you have on your right leg. That is the part of you that is of the world. Now feel the weight on your left leg. That is the part of you that loves Jesus and is in the kingdom of God. If you want to, transfer all your weight to your left leg. Doesn't that feel nice? Let's pray.

CLOSING PRAYER

Our dearest Father, we thank You that we are still talking about You, Jesus, because you want to confide in us because of what you have done for us and because you want us to understand. Lord, I pray for each of us that today, that if it is our worst day with you that it would be known to us that it is still infinitely better than our best day without you. In Jesus' Name we pray.
Amen.