**New Hope Sermon Auditing Jesus? 1/13/19**

Today we start our new sermon series on The Power of the Gospel. I believe the Central message that encapsulates the power of the gospel is that Jesus Christ is Lord!

**Some contemporary takes on Christianity**

But let me start first with a few contemporary takes in the United States on Jesus and Christianity: Actress Halle Berry said: “I believe in God. I just don't know if that God is Jehovah, Buddha or Allah.”

When Bill Gates was asked "Do you believe in God?" he said that he believes science has now filled in some explanations for disease and the weather. But after admitting that science can't explain everything, Gates commented: “The mystery and the beauty of the world is overwhelmingly amazing, and there's no scientific explanation of how it came about. To say that it was generated by random numbers, that does seem, you know, sort of an uncharitable view [laughs]. I think it makes sense to believe in God, but exactly what decision in your life you make differently because of it, I don't know. (*Jeff Goodell, "Bill Gates: The Rolling Stone Interview," Rolling Stone (3-27-14).*

David Platt questions the way people are invited to even become Christians. In his 2010 book *Radical* he asks: “How do we respond to this gospel? Suddenly contemporary Christianity sales pitches don’t seem adequate any more: ask Jesus to come into your heart. Invite Jesus to come into your life. ‘Pray this prayer, sign this card, walk down this aisle and accept Jesus as your personal Savior.’ Our attempts to reduce this gospel to a shrink-wrapped presentation that persuades someone to say or pray the right things back to us no longer seem appropriate. That is why none of these man-made catch phrases are in the Bible. You will not find a verse in scripture where people are told to ”bow your head, close your eyes and repeat after me.”…And you will not find an emphasis on accepting Jesus. We have taken the infinitely glorious Son of God, who endured the infinitely terrible wrath of God, and who now reigns as the infinitely worthy Lord of all, and we have reduced him to a poor, puny Savior who is just begging for us to accept him. Accept him? Do you really think Jesus needs our acceptance? Don’t we need *him*? ,,,Surely, this gospel evokes unconditional surrender of all that we are and all that we have to all that he is.” (David Platt, *Radical*, Multnomah, 2010, pp. 36-37).

Why? Because Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. (Rev. 19:16) Lordship is a total surrender to this glorious Son of God who **is** Lord of all. It’s an unconditional surrender – not with our own ‘I’ll follow you but first let me’…limitations**.** Embracing who Jesus is and what He has done is the central focus behind the power of the gospel. That is why the gospel is actuallyHis Wondrous story.

**Jesus as Lord in the New Testament**

This emphasis on Christ’s Lordship is woven throughout the New Testament, beginning in the Christmas narrative. The angel announced to the shepherds **“***good news of great joy for all people*. That news was that the infant the angels were heralding is *The Christ (Greek word), the Messiah (a Hebrew word), the Anointed One, the Lord.* Lk.2:11.

**Knowing this Lord Jesus is essential, first, for salvation**. Romans 10:9-10 says:*If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved*.” Colossians 2: 6-7says:*S*o then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. 1 Corinthians 15:56-58 says: “*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”* Victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. Giving ourselves fully to the work of the Lord…knowing that our labor in the Lord is not in vain. Christ’s Lordship in our lives is an essential identity marker of our salvation. As A.W. Pink said: “We do not ask: Is Christ your Savior? But is he, really and truly, your Lord? If he is not your Lord, then He is most certainly not your Savior.” Lordship is first a marker of salvation.

Secondly, **Lordship equals Obedience.** Jesus Himself said to religious people (and perhaps even his followers) , “*Why do you call me Lord, Lord, when you won’t obey me*?” As the reigning Lord of the universe, He will not tolerate second or third or a periphery place in a disciple’s life. Tony Evans has said “People want salvation but don’t want to put in the time to be strong disciples of Jesus Christ. What many Christians want to do is to audit the Christian life. An audit is where a person goes to class to get information, but is not required to do any of the work. They don’t have to take a test or write any papers or do any homework….They want the data without the responsibility. That’s what some folks do every Sunday. They audit Jesus.” (Tony Evans, Tony Evans’ book of illustrations, Moody Publishers, 2009, p.77) Interesting concept. Now I know some of you are auditing courses this semester and you do do the readings and some of the work, but still you do it without the commitment of responsibility and work involved in your courses for credit. Evans continues: “Jesus Christ takes the concept of discipleship and intimates: ‘I’m looking for a generation of followers who are so saturated in My thinking, My worldview, and My orientation that when integrated into the culture in which they are situated, the culture will have to live with the influence of Jesus Christ.’” (Ibid., p. 78)

This is why Paul urged the Ephesian Christians to “*Find out what pleases the Lord and do it*. (Eph.5:10). Obedience is faith in action. It is the lifeblood of the true followers of Jesus the Lord.

Thirdly, **Lordship is the key to victory**. Jesus is Lord over death, over disease, over Satan, over sin. It is each of these areas that defeat us on a daily basis unless we have the empowering, protecting, guiding presence of the Lord through the Spirit. There are certainly other gods out there and other religions that urge obedience to these gods. But none is equal to Jesus Christ. His is the name above all names. In fact, Paul tells the Philippians “*At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*.”(Phil.2:10-11). Every knee. Every tongue. Every spirit and false god.

Some of you will remember the story I told several years ago about my relationship with a Hindu devotee named Padma. She had been to our Ashram Bible studies and prayer times for a couple of years. One day she came to our meeting and complained of a stomach ache. We prayed over her and then learned that that night the pain had become excruciating and she had been rushed to the hospital. Turns out her appendix had ruptured and her life was in grave danger. After her successful surgery, I went to see her. I told her about Jesus as the Shepherd who died for her and wanted to guide her like one of His own sheep. She seemed open, so in the month in which she recuperated we studied Philip Keller’s book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* together. They were rich times and it seemed she was getting closer and closer to truly understanding who Jesus is. So that year for Christmas I gave her a plaque with a picture of Jesus as the Shepherd, holding one of his lambs. Hindus loved to visualize their gods – this aspect of their worship is called “darsan.” So she loved the picture. But here’s the clincher:

Padma had a god shelf, like many Hindus have in their home. Hers, however, was an elaborate, tall hutch filled with images of the gods and the guru she worshipped. Every day she would open the door of this hutch and burn incense and pray faithfully to these gods. She didn’t miss a day. Therefore, when she got the plaque picturing Jesus as the Great Shepherd, she treated him as one of the gods and added him to her god collection. She put that plaque on top of the hutch.

But the next morning she came downstairs to pray to her gods and all the other god images had fallen on their faces – only the Jesus plaque was upright. That happened the next night too. Isn’t that a powerful example of the reality of Christ’s Lordship? No other gods can stand before him. No other gods can deliver a devotee from sin or the fear of death or disease or Satan himself and his hosts of evil spirits who plague the world. Jesus Christ is Lord of Lords. His is the name that is above all other names. He is the One who gives His followers victory in His name, through His blood.

**Lordship Involves Surrender**

Christ’s victory was our topic in last week’s Bible study. We opened with answers to this question: ‘Can you share a time when you had victory through Christ over an issue or negative relationship or situation that you had not been able to conquer on your own?’ From there we looked at various scriptures on Christ’s victory and then we shared our understanding of what Jesus as Lord means. The key answers all focused on surrender. To have Christ as Lord of our lives moment by moment is a matter of surrender. It is a choice to do and think and act as Jesus wants. It is, as Platt said, “unconditional surrender.” Surrender with no strings attached. That is the key to a life of victory and joy in our relationship with God.

Yet surrender seems to be the wall that is causing Christians to just audit Jesus – they believe in Jesus and pray and do some good deeds to please Him but they are refusing or just plain afraid to surrender their hidden sins and woundedness to Him. Remember? This was the main prayer concern Sam texted to us while at Urbana - that the Holy Spirit break through and lead each person at Urbana to a total surrender to Christ as Lord. It is not enough to have Christ as Savior. The power of the gospel is that Jesus Christ is both Savior AND Lord. Lord over all other gods and authorities in this earth and in the heavenly realm. Lord over death. Lord over disease. Lord over history. Lord over the church and waiting to be Lord over our lives day to day. True Christians follow Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord, nothing held back.

Does that seem too daunting? Certainly when we audit Jesus, his demands don’t impinge on our lives and our will. It may seem safer that way, but it is not the Jesus way. And God understands that. This is why He sent us the Holy Spirit: we are too weak and self-centered to surrender all of ourselves to Jesus as Lord all day long. But the Spirit can empower us *to will and do God’s good pleasure* (Phil.2:13). The Spirit can transform our hearts and our thinking so *we are not squeezed into the world’s mold but are renewed to prove the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.* (Rom. 1:1-2). God Himself makes us able to live with Jesus as Lord.

So let me close with this wonderful promise about the Spirit’s enabling from the book of Jude: *Now unto Him who is* *able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before the glorious presence without fault and with great joy- to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.(*Jude 24). Amen. Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson 1/13/19

Song of response:

Jesus shall take the highest honor. Jesus shall take highest praise.

Let all earth join heaven in exalting the name which is above all other names.

Let’s bow the knee in humble adoration, for at His name very knee must bow.

Let every tongue confess He is Christ, God’s only Son;

Sovereign Lord we give you glory now.

For all honor and blessing and power belongs to you, belongs to you.

Belongs to you, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God.

(words and music: Chris Bowater)

Amen and Amen.