

Sunday, February 26, 2023 Lent 1 ***This is Jesus! Part 1 Jesus Forgives Us***

Psalm 32 Romans 10:5-13 John 3:1-17

Lent is a period of 40 days not including Sundays which begins on Ash Wednesday and leads us to Easter. It is a time period reflecting Jesus' life between His baptism and the beginning of his ministry when Jesus went into the wilderness "to be tested". It was during this time Jesus prepared himself for the purpose of his coming to Earth. It was his time alone with God the Father teaching him and guiding him about next steps, what to do, where to go and who to call and follow. He later called disciples to follow him, taught them and built up a following to his teaching and preaching. But Jesus' purpose was and is to save the people from sin and enable reconciliation with God to occur. This is what we read from John 3.

But on this First Sunday of this Lenten season our observance takes on many purposes- depending upon whether we are focused on our own individual or personal journey or as a church family. On the personal level, people who have been walking with Jesus throughout their lives might remember that years ago that during Lent there was a tendency to give up something- like coffee, sweets, chocolate. It was not just 'giving up' but it was called fasting as a means of changing one's life for the better. This only was successful if you had actually consumed these things and it was indeed a difficult thing to give. Giving has always been a part of Lent. For it was a time when a tangible amount of money was placed in coin boxes or holders each day to remind us to give to help others. Once Easter arrived these boxes would be collected, emptied and the money raised would go to a special 'mission' or outreach project.

Fasting takes on special meaning if one chooses not to eat specific meal time standards like meat and to consume only fish or seafood on Fridays. This is often observed by many people now; hence the popularity of fish fry Fridays. But if you didn't like fish, alternative meats were consumed anyway. Fasting also included not eating at all for a period of time and again giving the cost of what would have been consumed for another purpose to help others. The third part which might be considered essential is prayer. So many times we wonder about this world and its future. We wonder yet we may not fully pray to God and in these days filled with war, earthquake, thunderstorms in February, homelessness, food banks, rising food costs,

prayer is essential as we seek the path intended for each of us as individuals and as a church focused on Jesus. The three fold purpose of Lent- pray fast give

As a church our focus this Lenten season is “This is Jesus”. As many saw in the media over super bowl weekend, “Jesus Gets Us” messages are out there for anyone to see. During the season of lent we will hear and see stories about Jesus. Whether in national magazines, or new movies; whether on specialty television stations or referred to in situation comedies. The mention of the name of Jesus often occurs during this period called Lent. As Christians we might or not be aware of this but there is a tendency to recognize Jesus for who he is- but just who is Jesus? This is the question asked and this is Jesus is how we answer it.

All of these documentaries, articles and videos are trying to make sense of who Jesus is and the truth that Jesus is the most important and influential person who has ever walked the face of the earth- more than any sovereign ruler or politician- still shatters what should be known. Jesus changed the course of human history. Searching for the real Jesus is good because you want to be sure that as you come to understand Jesus you can know him for who he is like never before.

Even Jesus’ disciples were unsure of who he was and they followed him, watched, listened, worshiped and prayed with him. There was a moment when Jesus asked an important question of them. It is found in Matthew 16. He asks, “Who do people say that I am?” They answered: Moses, Elijah, or a new great prophet. And then he asks them a very important question which for us today is an important statement. Who do you say that I am? How would you answer Jesus’ question right now? This is the question we will return to as we learn more about what Jesus said and did and why it is so important to know Him! Who do you say Jesus is?

Simon Peter answered Jesus, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus then says, You are blessed Simon because God my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.” You call me Messiah. But when we hear this word today we may not fully grasp what Simon says. Messiah comes from the Hebrew word meaning anointed one, that is chosen for holy office. Christ is the Greek word for Messiah (Christos). This

messiah is the one sent by God to save his people. The Jewish people were looking for a political and military saviour. They thought that this was going to be a descendant of King David who would unite the 12 tribes of Israel. This messiah would also throw off the oppression of the Romans and re-establish Israel. But God sent Jesus – a greater saviour for Jesus came to save us from sins.

We believe that Jesus is this Messiah the Christ whose mission was to come in humility to be the ultimate and perfect sacrifice for sins. Jesus came for the entire world and all would be reconciled with God. This is Jesus- the Messiah.

The messiah Jesus came to save us from sin. But there are steps we must take before this will occur! 1) We must admit that we have sinned and need forgiveness. This is difficult for many of us—to admit that we are or did something wrong. This goes against our human nature for we each seek perfection. Yet we all sin and fall short of God's standard; whether big or small the consequence of sin is the same. As we read in Romans 6: "the wages of sin is death—this is spiritual death, that is being separated from God's peace, presence, power for all of eternity. But the good news is that the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus= the messiah. We all sin and to receive forgiveness we need to admit this. 2) We need to believe that Jesus is this messiah and we can trust him. We can trust Jesus because of what it says in John 3:16-17 God loved the world and sent Jesus to save it; God sent Jesus not to judge but to save the people of the world. This is the real Jesus- Jesus came to redeem that is forgive us from sin. But we must believe that Jesus is this saviour.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Messiah and that He is lord. Paul's letter to the Romans 10 describes how we might grow in relationship with Jesus. Paul states that if we confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death—we will receive eternal life. That is, we are to believe with heart to be justified and to confess with mouth in order to receive salvation. It is also reassuring that no one who believes in Jesus will be put to shame. The same Lord is lord of all. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. SO how might we answer the question who is Jesus? Jesus is the Messiah and he forgives our sins.

C. S. Lewis a professor at Cambridge University and a Christian theologian was agnostic; he didn't know if he believed God existed. He did not know what he believed about Jesus and at one point was challenged by the question, "Who is Jesus?" He began to pursue the answer to this question. He came to the conclusion that Jesus could never ever be viewed as just a good moral person or as a good teacher.

CSLEWIS:

I'm trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him, about Jesus. That I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who's merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a good moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the same level with the man who says he's a poached egg or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice, either this man 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 with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us, he did not intend to.....Now it seems to me obvious, that he was neither a lunatic nor a fiend and consequentially however strange, terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that he was and is God.

As we walk through Lent 2023, there will be questions, answers and more questions but the thing that is certain is that the Spirit of God will be tugging at you to respond. Who is Jesus = to you?

How you answer will help you as we share in this season of discovering Jesus. Is he a great teacher, good man or more? He is the one through whom we are forgiven of sin. But we must believe, confess and know that through him we are forgiven. Who is Jesus? This is Jesus-and he forgives sins. Thanks be to God.

PRAYER> Holy God of grace we praise you for your gift to us in Jesus. We praise you that by faith believing in Him we are forgiven. We believe. Hear now our confessions and forgive us we pray. SILENCE. Amen.