

REDISCOVER JESUS, PART 83: "JESUS' TRUE IDENTITY"

LUKE 22:63-71

Ps. Jeffrey Susila

Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, I'm Jeff - one of the pastors at HMCC of Jakarta. And it's my privilege to be preaching the Word of God for us today.

Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently in Part 83 of our sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus," where we're going through the Gospel of Luke together.

Before we get started, let me pray for us again...

Sermon Introduction

If someone were to ask you right now... "who are you?" or "tell me about yourself" - What would you say? Think about it for a second... What would be the first words that pop into your mind?

Well, when we think about our identity, we usually think of it in relation to something else:

- It could be in relation to your ethnicity or the country that you're from: you could say, "I'm American" or "I'm Indonesian."
- Or in relation to your job or what you do - for example, "I'm a teacher."
- Or maybe in relation to someone else: "I'm so-and-so's parent, sibling, child, spouse, or friend."

But, nowadays, we're exposed to more words and more identifiers than ever before. Especially our teens (and the next generation), we're now exposed to more things (on the internet; on social media) than ever before - teaching us that our identity is based on our appearance, personality, gender, sexuality, success, performance, finances, hobbies, and so on...

Because when we think of our identity, we usually think of what we have or what we've done (in relation to something else or someone else).

But as those who identify ourselves as followers of Christ, then shouldn't our identity mainly be in relation to Christ's identity? Shouldn't it be centered - not on what we've done - but on who Jesus is and what he's done?

So then, the key question is: Who is Jesus? And how does his identity affect our own identities? That's what we'll take a look at today.

Because in today's passage, we'll see the religious authorities questioning Jesus' identity. And then we'll learn of Jesus' true identity... directly from Jesus himself.

So who does Jesus say that he is?

The One Thing

Jesus is more than a prophet or king, but is God himself.

Scripture Introduction

If you have your Bibles with you, please turn to Luke 22:63-71.

For context - from the previous passage - we know that after Jesus was betrayed at the Garden of Gethsemane, he was taken to the High Priest's house.

And we also know that Peter, one of Jesus' 12 disciples, was also there (at the High Priest's courtyard), and that's where he denied Jesus 3x before the rooster crowed.

It's not yet morning. And while we now know what happened with Peter *outside* (in the courtyard)... we now get a glimpse of what's happening with Jesus *inside* (in the High Priest's house)...

Scripture Reading

Let's read Luke 22:63-71.

⁶³ Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. ⁶⁴ They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" ⁶⁵ And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

⁶⁶ When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, ⁶⁷ "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, ⁶⁸ and if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹ But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." ⁷⁰ So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." ⁷¹ Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

This is God's Word.

Overview

Who is Jesus?

- I. More than a prophet (vv. 63-65)
- II. More than a king (vv. 66-71)

I. More than a prophet (vv. 63-65)

Look at verse 63 - While Jesus was being held in custody, the men who arrested him at the Garden of Gethsemane (most likely, the temple guards) were mocking him and beating him repeatedly.

Now, imagine someone you love (think of a family member or a dear friend) being isolated from the ones who love them - surrounded instead by those who wish to do them harm); we would not want to imagine anything bad happening to them... But that's the situation that Jesus is in - he's surrounded by those who are against him - being abused physically and verbally; brutally beaten and mocked again and again.

Luke doesn't list out all the things that the guards did to Jesus (and I can't imagine what our Lord must've gone through that night).

Look at verse 64 - Luke records one specific event that happened: the guards blindfolded Jesus. And as they took turns beating him, they kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?"

No one deserves to be treated like this...

And Jesus hasn't even done anything wrong (out of all people). And he's never said anything that's untrue. For the past three years, he preached about the Kingdom of God to those who'd listen, he healed many from incurable diseases (such as leprosy), he cast out demons, he performed many miracles (feeding 5,000 people; and even resurrected some from the dead)!

There's no legitimate reason to think that Jesus has done anything wrong. These temple guards (and the religious leaders) just don't like him. Because as Jesus was teaching about God's Kingdom, he confronted these religious leaders about their hypocrisy. He wanted them to repent of their sinful ways, and turn to God. But they didn't like that at all! They don't like their authority questioned.

So they plotted to kill him. And this hatred is widespread: from the religious leaders down to the temple guards.

They merely thought that Jesus was an ordinary human being (not a prophet), but they treated him even less than that; less than human. They turned him into a game, dehumanizing & toying with him.

Now, how evil do you have to be to do - or to even think - of doing something like this?

We may think that these guards are completely messed up, and that we're nothing like them!

<pause>

But brothers and sisters... we're more than capable of doing something like this too... As sinners, that seed of evil is also in our hearts. The human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

We may not think that we're as evil and aggressive as these temple guards, but how many times have we been aggressive in a different way? Perhaps, passive aggressive?

Because passive aggression is actually just a creative way of hurting others while trying to maintain our innocence.

- So when you think back to when people have hurt you in the past (or even now), have you ever thought of hurting them back?
 - Perhaps by giving them a backhanded compliment that sounds like a compliment, but is actually an insult?
 - Or giving them the silent treatment - ignoring them or refusing to talk to them as a way of punishing or hurting them?

In the heat of the moment, it's almost as if we forget that the other person is human...

<pause>

When I first moved to Indonesia, my brother warned me about the driving in Jakarta - how it can be a bit aggressive. Cars will cut you off, as if you're not there. Others may not let you pass, as you try to drive through. And many may be honking at you. But he gave me a helpful tip: "when you're really desperate, open your car window. And show your face and raise your hand. It usually helps." I asked "why?" and he said, "I think it just reminds them that you're human." I think it was kinda a joke, but I think it's kinda true too.

- I had to do this a couple of times, and it kinda works!
- Now, even when I'm the one getting frustrated with other cars, I'm reminded that they're not merely cars...

In the heat of the moment, we forget that there are actually people in those cars! That's a family (who just had a baby) and maybe going to the hospital, that's a couple going on a date, that's a Taxi driver (working & doing his job), that's a guy rushing to the nearest rest stop for a bathroom break. These are humans.

But as we treat others with aggression (even passive aggression), we can forget sometimes that others are humans too. And it's much easier now than ever before to forget that we're interacting with people (especially in this digital age where we often communicate via WhatsApp or social media). And when we forget who we're interacting with, it can be easier for us to want to hurt them (even if it's our loved ones). And that's only a small glimpse of the evil that's in our hearts.

And for the men who were holding Jesus in custody, their sinfulness is spurring one another on. Causing a sort of mob mentality - Each of us are sinful on our own, but get a group of sinners together, and we can possibly do unimaginable things that we wouldn't do on our own...

<pause>

Look at verse 65 - [the temple guards] said many other things against Jesus, blaspheming him.

They said many other things to Jesus - mocking him & verbally abusing him. But from all the other things they said to Jesus, notice how Luke specifically highlights one particular thing - one cruel game that they're playing.

Why is that?

Luke is intentionally emphasizing something to his reader(s). Luke is not only highlighting the sinfulness of man, but he's also highlighting something about Jesus. Luke - inspired by the Holy Spirit - has been very intentional with how he's structuring his writing.

Look at the context of what just happened immediately before these guards questioned Jesus' identity as a prophet:

- Jesus just prophesied that one of his disciples would betray him (and Judas - one of the twelve disciples - indeed betrayed him with a kiss).
- And Jesus just prophesied that Peter would deny him 3x before the rooster crows (and Peter indeed denied him 3x).
- If we go back - to when Jesus and his disciples were making their way to Jerusalem - Jesus even prophesied about this very moment!

Luke 18:31b-32 (ESV)

³¹ ...“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³² For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon”

So as these temple guards are mocking Jesus as a false prophet, Luke is emphasizing that Jesus is not a false prophet, but a true prophet!

That should be clear to Luke's audience!

- And if we read Luke's entire Gospel (along with the other Gospel accounts), what should be clear is that Jesus is no mere prophet, but he's more than a prophet.
- He's not merely a human prophet speaking the Word of God, but he is the Word of God himself - the Word of God made flesh!

The Gospel of John says this:

John 1:1-3, 14 (ESV)

¹“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.... ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus is not a mere human or prophet, but he is God himself.

- If he wanted to, Jesus could easily name each person who’s hitting him as he’s blindfolded.
 - That would’ve been so easy for Jesus. Not only that, but he actually knew each person (who’s hitting him) before they were even formed in their mother’s womb (Psalm 139:13) - these men were hitting, not only THE true prophet (the Word of God made flesh), but they were mocking & hitting their very creator.

So it’s ironic - these men were beating and mocking Jesus because they thought he was being blasphemous. But they were the ones being blasphemous - profaning and insulting God himself.

Blasphemy is a serious offense! It's the opposite of praising or glorifying God; it's cursing God!)

- And the penalty of cursing God is death!
- The Law prescribed the death penalty for blasphemy.

Jesus, rightfully & easily could’ve punished them for such blasphemous acts!

- Jesus could’ve shamed them (and probably even scared them to death) by telling them exactly their names (as they’re hitting him) and - if he wanted to - Jesus could even tell them all of the sins that they’ve done, and what they’ll do and what they’re even thinking of doing. And he could also command more than 12 armies of angels to rescue him from this moment (Matt. 26:53-53).

Yet... Jesus allows these men to mock and beat him. Why? Why would he allow himself to be humiliated like this?

Because if Jesus was not humiliated; if he did not take the shame & punishment that we deserved... if he did not become our substitute... then it would be us facing eternal shame and punishment in Hell.

- Because of our sinful, evil, wicked hearts... What we deserve is eternal humiliation and punishment in Hell.
- But Jesus chose to endure such mockery and physical abuse for our sake (as our substitute)... because he loves us. So that we don’t have to.

Jesus Christ is more than a mere prophet, but is God himself. And Jesus, the Son of Man - the Son of God - has come down from Heaven to Earth, enduring humiliation (even to the point of death on the cross), for the sake of sinners (out of his love for us). So that those who repent of their sins, and have faith in him will not be punished in Hell, but will have eternal life in Heaven.

<pause>

This is the Good News - this is what Jesus has done for us. So how does this affect our identities?

Well, our *old* identity is that we're once sinners - defined by our love for sin and hatred toward God (just like these temple guards); completely deserving of God's wrath.

But because of Jesus, we've been given new identities! If Jesus is truly who he says he is and he truly did what he says he'll do, then... that means that we're no longer merely sinners, but we're sinners who've been redeemed by Christ.

- We're no longer defined by our sins, but we're justified in Christ - which means that we're made right in the sight of God. Now, when God sees us, He no longer sees our sins, but he sees Jesus' perfect righteousness covering us. We're justified people, completely redeemed.
 - This means that we're so much more valuable than we may think! We're worth much more to God than we can ever imagine!
 - Much more than merely our appearance, personality, gender, sexuality, success, performance, finances, hobbies... even more than our sins and failures...
 - Or else why would Jesus bear our shame like this for our sake? There's nothing good enough that we can offer him on our own. It wouldn't make sense for him to endure such humiliation and abuse for sinners like us (unless... he truly deeply loves us).
 - If we consider how much God truly loves us, then this makes more sense... because you wouldn't just do this for anybody, right? You wouldn't want to suffer for no reason? But if it's for the sake of the people whom you love the most in this world... then it'd make more sense.
 - So how loving is our God to even think of doing something like this for sinners who were against Him? How much must He love us?
- And as His redeemed people, we now bear his name as Christians.
 - And as Christians, we're now to faithfully live out our new identities by being more and more like Christ in character.
 - And one thing you can do to love and honor Christ - to be more like him - is to invite others to expose you of your sins.

Let's be reminded that the reason that the religious leaders were trying to get Jesus killed in the first place was because Jesus exposed them of their sins and rebuked them for their hypocrisy! Jesus desired for them to repent of their sins and to turn from their sinful ways... And they didn't like that at all!

- So unlike these religious authorities, let's have an open mind, acknowledging that we won't be right all the time - let's leave some room for a brother or sister to lovingly rebuke us, bringing to light our sinful tendencies (where we may be sinning or even blaspheming against God).
 - Ask a brother or sister, "Hey, has there been anything that stands out to you about my sinfulness or sinful tendencies in my life?"
 - So who can you talk to this week regarding your sins? Who can help keep you accountable?

- Now, this may not be what you're used to and it may be a bit awkward at first.... But it's going to be so helpful as we keep each other accountable, and as we build up one another, so we can be shaped more and more like Christ in character - by the Holy Spirit.

<pause>

And as we now start to look outward to one another... let's also be reminded that our identity in Christ also means that others (our brothers and sisters) are also worth more to God than you can ever imagine.

- They're also worth more to God than their past sins and failures - even if some of those sins were, unfortunately, against you...
 - So if others have hurt you, please don't just leave it be, allowing it to grow to resentment or bitterness (that would lead to division in our church; we wouldn't want that at all).
 - Instead, let's be willing to have open dialogue with one another.
 - And however way you might've been hurt, let's not assume and think that the other person knows exactly what they did.
 - Actually... assume the opposite! Assume that they don't know better, and that they don't know that they've hurt you... so they need your help to tell them that they've hurt you, so that they may be built up in character!
 - Assume that you need to be the one to take the initiative to talk to them about it.
- Hypothetical example: maybe the temple guards were offended when Jesus previously said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19).
 - Again, hypothetically, maybe they could've gone to Jesus and ask, "Teacher, what do you mean? I'm a little confused and, to be honest, a bit offended because I've spent my life guarding the temple, but you're about to destroy it? And it's taken 46 years to build this temple... what do you mean you can raise it back in 3 days?"
 - Jesus was not actually talking about the physical temple, but his body (Jesus is the true temple) - and Jesus' body will be destroyed (he will be killed), and then in 3 days, he'll be raised again.
 - Perhaps such open dialogue would lead some of these guards to understand the Truth of what Jesus has been teaching about. But instead, closed-mindedness and lack of open dialogue led to them resenting Jesus - blindfolding him, beating him, mocking him, blaspheming against him; treating him as less than human.
 - In the same way, we're also at risk of dehumanizing, and being bitter towards our brothers and sisters in Christ if we're not open to having open dialogue with one another.
 - So let's be open to having awkward, tough conversations for the sake of building up one another, and for the sake of our Lord, Jesus (who's more than a mere prophet...)

First, Luke showed us that Jesus was more than a prophet. Next, we'll see how Jesus is more than a king...

II. More than a king (vv. 66-71)

Look at verse 66 - when day (or morning) finally came, the assembly of the elders of the people (both chief priests and scribes) gathered together. And they led Jesus away to their council.

This is the great council at Jerusalem, known as the Sanhedrin.

- This was like the supreme court for the Jews; this council was the ultimate authority in religious matters, as well as legal and governmental affairs.
- However, the Sanhedrin does not have legal authority to inflict capital punishment (the death sentence) unilaterally.
 - Since they're under Roman occupation, it's the Romans who can legally inflict capital punishment.

So in order to get Jesus killed, their strategy is to incriminate Jesus by getting him to say publicly (on record; during an official trial) that he is the Christ.

- Side note: "Christ" is not Jesus' last name. It's a title, which means "the anointed one." The same title in Hebrew is "Messiah." So both titles mean the same thing. "Christ" is in Greek, while "Messiah" is in Hebrew, and both mean "the anointed one" - referring to God's promised King who is to come from the line of David.
- This would be an issue for the Romans - because you're not allowed to have any other king other than Caesar. So if the council could get Jesus to say that he is the Christ - the promised King - then they could try to argue that he is a rival king (and a threat) to Caesar and the Romans.

Look at verse 67 - so they asked Jesus: are you the Christ? (are you the promised King?) "If you are the Christ, tell us!"

Then Jesus answers them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer."

Jesus doesn't deny that he is the Christ (the King of kings). But he doesn't answer them either.

- He basically says, "You won't believe whatever I say. And if I ask you questions (to challenge your understanding and beliefs), you won't answer them either."
 - We know this to be true. Previously, when Jesus' authority was questioned by the religious leaders, he asked them, "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?" And the religious leaders chose not to answer him, saying, "we don't know."
 - Because if they said "John's authority was from heaven" then they'll sound like hypocrites (because they didn't believe what John taught), but if they said that "John's authority is from man" then they're afraid to anger those who believe that John was a prophet.
 - So, in order to protect their own reputation, they didn't answer Jesus.
 - They're not open-minded. They're close-minded - they don't really care about the truth.

In reality, Jesus has taught the Truth to these religious leaders over and over again. He exposed them of their wrongs again and again. They just didn't respond in the way that they should). And even after all these

opportunities - even after hearing about many of Jesus' miraculous works, they still didn't believe that he's the Christ - the promised Messiah.

So they've already made up their minds! They're not asking Jesus if he's the Christ because they truly wanted to know the truth. They just wanted to use what Jesus said against him.

- This was not a fair trial to begin with!
 - We know that even before Jesus was arrested, the council was already plotting to kill Jesus (Luke 22:1-2). And from other Gospel accounts, we know that after Jesus was arrested, they were seeking false testimonies so that they may put him to death.
- They weren't open to having dialogue with Jesus (they weren't interested in getting down to the Truth).

For those of you who have *not yet* put your faith in Christ...

- Don't be like the religious leaders who already made up their minds before they even questioned Jesus.
 - Humbly have an open mind, as you carefully consider who Jesus is and what the Good News is that he offers to you...
- And don't close your mind and assume that you already understand what the Good News is... It's been said that "when you hear what you're about to hear, if you don't think it's the best news you've ever heard, you can be absolutely certain that you've not understood it" (Christianity Explored - Ep.1).
 - So please carefully consider and intentionally make an effort to understand what God has made available for you... because those who reject Jesus will face eternal punishment, but those who receive him will have eternal life! The Gospel has huge, eternal complications! It's the one thing that you want to make sure you understand!
 - So don't be like those who reject him before even considering who Jesus is...
 - And don't be like me, years ago - when I didn't take the Bible seriously. I thought I knew what the Bible is (what it says) and who Jesus is... when I actually didn't. I didn't know what I was rejecting...
 - And unfortunately, that's what many people are doing... they're rejecting the Gospel without understanding what they're actually rejecting...
 - There was an experiment done by a London newspaper: they had a man stand in front of a busy train station, handing out brochures. On the brochure, it says "if you bring this brochure back to me, I'll give you 5 pounds" (which is about 100k Rupiah).
 - In 3 hours, guess how many people came back? Only 11 people came back for the money.
 - Most people thought they already knew what he was handing out and thought that it wouldn't do them any good, so they just passed him by.
 - Some took the brochure, and didn't read it (they just threw it away). Or if they did read it, they didn't believe it.
 - Many people missed out on this man's offer.
 - Don't make the same mistake with the Gospel. Don't miss out on Jesus' offer for you.
 - Carefully consider who he says he is...

<pause>

Now, look at verse 69 - But even then... even when Jesus knows that the council wouldn't believe in him even if he tells them that he's the Christ...

Even then... Jesus still tells them one more time (giving them one final opportunity to believe in him).

Jesus says, "But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

This was a big proclamation from Jesus! He refers to himself as the Son of Man - alluding to the prophecy (in Daniel) of God's promised King whose Kingdom reign will be forever.

- Jesus is boldly answering the council's question!
- He's not only saying that he's a king, but that he's more than a king... he's THE King.
 - He's God's promised King whom they've been waiting for! (So one more time, Jesus is making this clear to the religious leaders).

Notice what Jesus says, "But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

- "From now on..."
 - Jesus foretells a time in the future...
 - This is a unique time in redemptive history - because there will be a great shift (a great change) that will be happening from this moment on...
 - Jesus will be glorified! He will be exalted!
 - Since Jesus' birth in a manger, he endured humiliation, which continued throughout his life and which culminates in his crucifixion and death...
 - But from now on, after his suffering and death, there will be no more humiliation. But in his resurrection onward, he will be greatly exalted and he will ascend and be seated at the right hand of the power of God! Jesus will be glorified!

Notice what Jesus is saying here about himself - he will be seated at the right hand of the power of God. Now, we know from Scripture that God does not share His glory with anyone or anything else, but Himself (Isaiah 42:8). And God is one (Deut. 6:4) - there is no other like Him. Then the logical conclusion from what Jesus is saying is that Jesus is more than a prophet, more than a king, but he's God himself!

<pause>

How would the council respond to Jesus' claim? Would they finally realize who they were actually speaking to?

Unfortunately not.

Look at verse 70 - they asked a follow-up question: "Are you the Son of God, then?"

- Their focus is still on trying to get Jesus to incriminate himself.
- They weren't interested in the Truth that Jesus was sharing with them. Thus, proving Jesus' point in the first place: "If I tell you, you will not believe."

To answer their question, Jesus says, "You say that I am."

- Jesus does not deny their claim.
- They've said the right words. They don't believe it, but they've said the right words... Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the Son of God.
- So even though they don't believe it, Jesus doesn't - and can't - deny what they've said (because it's absolutely true).

The council took Jesus' answer - his non-denial - as a "yes."

Look at verse 71 - they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

- The council has heard enough.
- But remember that they've already made up their minds in advance. They're just trying to get Jesus to basically say anything that would be good enough for them to use when they bring him to the Roman court. They feel like they finally have what they needed.

In so doing, they've consciously and willingly rejected the Son of God (even after hearing it from his own testimony - from his own lips)...

<pause>

Again, if you don't know Jesus (yet), please genuinely ask & pray, "Jesus, are you the Christ? Are you truly the Son of God? Please reveal yourself to me, and help me with my unbelief."

- Genuinely seek the Truth by reading the Bible - which is the Word of God Himself! By reading the Bible, you can find out who God is from His own lips! His written Word is as good as His verbal Word.
- If what the Bible says is true... that we're all sinners heading towards Hell... then Jesus is truly the best news we've ever heard! Because of Jesus, we are saved!
- So if Jesus is truly who he says he is... if Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Word of God Himself made flesh... then our response should be: "What further testimony do we need?! We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"
 - Jesus has told us himself who he is - actually, the entire Bible is telling us who God is! It's like His autobiography.
 - So we should be proclaiming, "Jesus, you're indeed the Christ! You are the Son of God! You're the only one worthy of worship!"

If this is you - or if you're still trying to get to know who Jesus is or trying to understand the Gospel - then we'd love to help. Please come talk to me or others around you after our service. You don't have to wrestle with this on your own. We'd love to talk to you more about Jesus! And we'd love to help you study and understand the Bible.

<pause>

For those of us who have already put our faith in Christ...

This Gospel is still the best news that we've ever heard!

And let's be reminded that before Jesus was crucified, our Lord Jesus himself proclaimed that he is indeed the Son of Man - who will sit at the right hand of the power of God. And so after his resurrection and his ascension, that's where Jesus is at now as he's interceding for us. Still thinking about us and praying for us.

Our Lord - our God - knows us and what we're going through right now and he's still praying for us from his heavenly throne. How encouraging is that? That, even as we may be going through certain hardships right now regarding our family, relationships, job, or anything else... that the one who is for us is not merely a prophet or king, but God himself!

But still, we can get discouraged at times because we easily forget about this important truth. So please take some time tonight to reflect and to remember who Jesus truly is, and ask yourself:

- How does that change how I view my worries and concerns?

I hope we can be reminded that just as Christ spent some time in humiliation and pain... he is now glorified and in power. And those who believe in him and are united in him will not remain in weakness, but will one day also be glorified.

- How does that change how you view your present worries and concerns?

<pause>

And if Jesus is truly the Christ, the promised King (who's more than a worldly king) then this also means that his people is also more than a worldly kingdom. Because Jesus is God himself then this means that his people is more than a worldly kingdom, but a heavenly kingdom, citizens of the Kingdom of God!

Later on, when Jesus was brought to Pilate (the Roman governor of Judea), he confirmed this very thing and he made it clear; he said...

John 18:36 (ESV)

³⁶Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world"

So as a gathering of Christ's people - his church - what characterizes our church? If Jesus is more than a king of this world and his kingdom is not of this world, then we should be worried if our church is characterized mainly by the things of this world.

- Again, there are many things that can characterize this world: beauty, money, power, success...
- But there's one specific characteristic or identifier that the world does not have...
 - Only those in relationship with Christ can identify themselves as Christians.
 - And only Christians can gather together as Christ's church.

- And we're meant to be ambassadors of Christ - like a city on a hill that cannot be hidden - representing Jesus to a fallen world.
- So then now, if outsiders from the watching world were to look at our church, would they say, this group is just like any other group of people that they've seen before... that we're together when things are good, but then when things are bad... We start breaking apart? Or will they see a group of people that's unlike anything they've seen before - a diverse group of people united in Christ even amid our differences? Even amid difficult trials?

Just as we learned together at our congregational retreat a couple of weeks ago... We're to be a beautiful display of God's glory - our church is to be a beautiful display of unity!

- Just like how a group of sinners (like the temple guards & the sanhedrin) can do unimaginably evil things together.
- A group of Christians gathered together as a church can do unimaginably beautiful things to display the glory of God:
 - As we love those who are different from us.
 - As we forgive those who've wrongfully sinned against us.
 - As we extend grace to those who may not deserve our grace.

Which of these things can you do for your church - for your brothers and sisters - today?

<pause>

When the watching world sees a group of Christians worshiping God together, living out the Gospel together... our witness of Christ becomes more convincing!

- Going back to the experiment with the man handing out the brochures... imagine if there was now a group of people handing out the brochures, and there's a group of people waiting in line to exchange their brochures for 5 pounds.
- Would people continue to just pass by, or would they stop to observe and notice that something is happening here?
 - It's the same with a group of Christians boldly proclaiming the Gospel to others and living out the Christian life together!
 - Our lives become a living testimony of the Gospel (that other people can't ignore!).
 - We become examples of what it looks like when your identity is centered on Christ's identity.

So let's not forget our true identities in Christ (both individually as Christians and corporately as a church). And we can remind each other of our true identities by pointing one another to Jesus' identity...

The One Thing

Jesus is more than a prophet or king, but is God himself.

Let's pray.