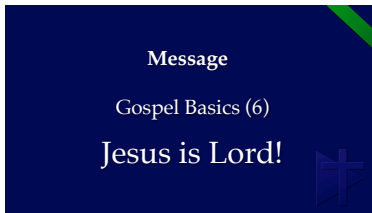


Jesus is Lord

November 2018



Opening

Continuing series on the words of the Gospel. If we better understand the words then we will better get the message of the Gospel. Previous 5 messages in this series are all available on church website as both text and audio in series 'Grasping the Gospel'. Study notes are provided in the text.

This week's Gospel word comes as a complete statement setting out the core of our faith: Jesus is Lord! *This rings parallel to today's celebration of Christ the King.*

The Words:

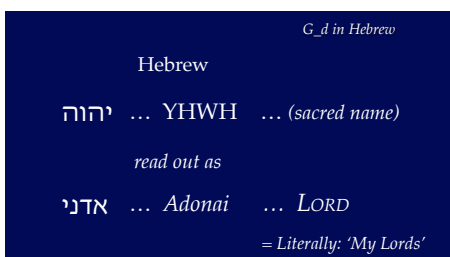
As we have seen before in this series the words we know in English are translations which always bring some issues. So let's break it down and dig into it a bit.

Jesus is Lord.

I guess we can be confident about the name of Jesus although I do meet people who doubt he ever existed and some people here were educated in communist countries who tell me that is what they were taught. Jesus certainly existed as much as anyone ever existed in recorded history.

The word we do need to think about is 'lord'. This word has a history in Hebrew, Greek and English.

In Hebrew the name of God revealed to Moses was -and for the Jewish people still - remains sacred. Names are not just labels but revelations of the self-being. They are precious opportunities for relationship. Consequently the name of God was treated so carefully that it was not said. Even today Jews refer to *Ha Shem* as a roundabout way of referring to God with reference to the name he revealed and write G_d in English without a vowel to continue the practice of not openly referring to God.



So in the Hebrew scriptures while the text showed YHWH readers were instructed to read this as *Adonai*. You can see this in English Bibles when the God is referred to as LORD all in Capitals but with the L enlarged.

This is a lot of background before coffee but worth knowing! Thus *Adonai* or 'LORD' became the way of referring to God. For Jews this reference to God as LORD emphasised the covenant relationship of the Jewish people with YHWH as their Lord God and King. The hope of Israel was that YHWH, the God of the covenant, would be come Lord of all.

Hebrew	אֲדֹנָי	Adonai	Translations
	to		
Greek	Κύριος	Kurios	
	to		
English	OT = LORD / NT = Lord		

So when the title Lord was applied to the Risen Jesus let us all understand the draw down of meaning and significance that came with it. Jesus was being referred to by a title all Jews knew and applied to God Almighty.

This got translated into Greek with the term Κύριος / *Kurios* which becomes ‘Lord’ in English.

So when Paul, the Jewish believer in Jesus says this to the Corinthians (1.12:3)

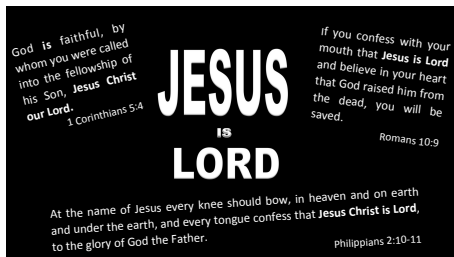
³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

We may understand what he is drawing on and pointing to.

So far this biblical theology is the easy part.

Now to: What is it saying in the gospel and how do we live that?

What the gospel creed of “Jesus is Lord” says is that Jesus, known in history as a crucified Jewish man was vindicated and proven victorious in who he was and what he said by being raised from the grave by God to be Lord of all and exercise God’s full authority to make right what is wrong. It is saying that he is the one through whom God is at work to redeem creation and for this purpose all authority has been given to him.



Those of us who say this and believe it are declaring that God is on his throne and has appointed Jesus to realise his victory over sin and death through all creation.

That is the claim:

- It is an exclusive and unique claim.
- It is an absolute claim about Jesus and Jesus alone. ... Jesus is Lord of ALL.

Jesus is the ultimate authority to consider in all things. That is very good news.

Everything is referred to him and rightfully subjected to him.

He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Nothing and no one gets above or around him.

That is the heart of the Gospel. God so loved the world that he sent Jesus. In coming and engaging on the cross Jesus overcame all that comes against God and humanity so he was raised as one worthy to be Lord of all.

We who recognise that authority bow the knee in reverence and submission to the one God has appointed Lord.

To the extent we do this we are his church.

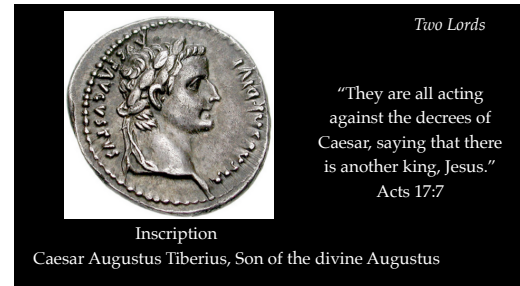
To the extent that we follow and obey Jesus as Lord, we are truly his church in his name.

But if we get the word ‘Lord’ mixed up we may fall short of what this claims and requires. The only other lord I have on this piece of flat earth is my landlord. His name is Ad and while I respect him I do not think of him as a major authority in my life.

To get a better appreciation let’s go back to Roman times in the New Testament.

From about half a century before Jesus was born an Emperor cult had been developing in the Roman Empire where there was no attempt to separate politics and religion.

What took hold from the time of Caesar Augustus was an expectation of public devotion to the Emperor to ensure that Rome continued to prosper. The Roman rulers were convinced that Rome had given the world peace and with that prosperity. With Rome in charge wars had stopped and trade flourished. All this was said to be a blessing from the gods mediated through the divine Caesars. They promoted this claim on every coin.



One of the practices this cult gave rise to was for people to greet each other saying ‘Ave’ or ‘Hail Caesar’ and ‘Caesar is Lord’. That was a way to affirm the faith of the empire in its divine leadership. Then once every now and then all good Roman citizens were expected to offer a little devotion on behalf of the emperor. It was a pouring of wine or a burning of grain at a shrine.

So while Romans were proclaiming that Caesar was Lord to reinforce the divine order of Roman power and prosperity, one group of people were saying something else: They were saying “Jesus is Lord.” This went on for 300 years with the Roman State doing its best to stamp out the alternative claim to Lordship.

That early experience captures the tension Jesus said would come between his lordship and the claims of his world. In some places today the contest is just as fierce as it was in Rome. The Communist Parties of China or North Korea or the Muslim regimes of many places have alternative lords who do not tolerate competition.

God’s church is the community of people who acclaim Jesus as Lord and seek to realise his kingdom among themselves and in the world.

Church is given the mission of living in the Lordship of Jesus to the extent that it provides the world an alternative way of being human, a counter culture, a better option established in heaven. That is us here and now.

Bowing the knee to Jesus as Lord is a good thing to do. It redeems, restores and revives broken humanity in ways that the ‘lords’ of this world do not. European Marxism was last century’s big effort to do this and it failed.¹

Church is where we learn to live with Jesus as Lord. This is the stuff of discipleship. This does not come naturally and requires ongoing conversion.

It’s important to note that Jesus did not leave a rulebook to establish his lordship. He is Lord because he lives now in victory over sin and all its features. His words are alive because he is alive. When we receive him his words live, when we receive his words he is alive and with us.

¹ China maintains the Communist power structure but has given up on the Communist economy.

Why is Living for Jesus as Lord difficult?

There are simple reasons and difficult reasons

Simple reason: Rebellious hearts.

Left to ourselves we are the centre of our own universe and whatever we believe about Jesus he is there for us. Jesus the lamb is what we expect and that only allows for us to remain on the throne. Jesus the Lion is seen as competition!

Complex reasons: Bad education. By that I mean we have been trained to think in ways that do not consider anyone as Lord.

Let's consider:

- The typical Westerner -and I suspect anyone in science or technology- is empirically trained. That means we think from the ground up, we are data-driven rather than being open to revelation from a personal source. We work it out rather than believe anyone.
- Then the typical Westerner is encouraged -especially in this country- to place themselves at the centre and reference everything to themselves as individuals.
- We have been trained to assess everything on a cost-benefit basis. It's as if the numbers for or against are determinative. That might be so in business but Jesus as Lord might not be so convinced.
- We have been politically conditioned to seek consensus and group agreement as if that represents the right thing to do. How could Jesus disagree with the majority?

This is the world I watch on the news where Jesus is not acknowledged as Lord. Church is meant to be a total contrast but I have to say, I don't always see it.

The point of reference for Gospel believing Christians is Jesus as Lord.

The questions always become:

- What does the Lord require?
- How would Jesus act out God's Kingdom in our context?

That is the starting point and focus.

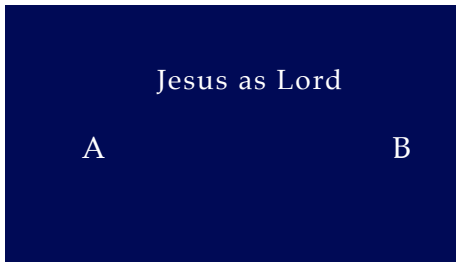
To engage that question we may well need to shut down or mute some other question or source of reference. For example:

- What does the culture say?
- What do I want?
- What am I afraid of?
- What does my life experience demand here?
- What does my professional training say?
- What do I think will work or be efficient or effective?
- What keeps everyone happy?

The mind of a disciple goes to his Lord and seeks a lead from him. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the source books to learn the mind and ways of Jesus.

That is very different from what we are typically taught in secular education today.

What I am saying is not anti-intellectual or blind faith. The mind must be exercised with a searching of the heart but it is about the focus of discernment on what does Jesus the Lord call for here? That is a big shift and conversion for most educated people.



In personal terms between people it's the difference between a flat conversation entirely between person A and B and a conversation where both A and B reference their conversation to Jesus as Lord.

In my view we need to learn this because the world has disciplined many of us in ways of thinking in a world where Jesus is not recognised as Lord.

Inside the Church and outside we are called to stand and live with reference to Jesus as Lord. For us the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom.

Conclusion:

Getting into Church is easy - you walk through the open door and yet Jesus described his way as narrow and difficult.

Being converted to Christ from whatever is quite easy - a few prayers and possibly baptism or a public commitment. These things are not that hard.

The real line to cross and path to walk is receiving Jesus as Lord because he is and you really want him to rule in your life.

That does not happen by accident.

It requires decision and faithful obedience. It is what discipleship is about.

Why do this? Because it's true and true people want to live true lives.

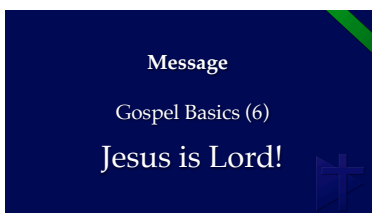
Eugene Peterson -recently departed- described it this way: It's a long obedience in the same direction

If you have never actually decided to accept Jesus as Lord, you need to take hold of him as Lord or wonder why you are here.

Some of us still need to take off our crowns and lay them before Jesus to accept and submit to him as Lord.

'Jesus is Lord' Study Questions

November 2018



These questions are provided for small group and personal study. They are designed to test and deepen understanding of The Gospel declared in 'Jesus is Lord' and take you beyond content to reflection and application. It may take more than one session to cover this. If you get stuck, want support or help, please ask Francis or Barbara.

Study Questions:

Content:

The first part of this sermon was about words and what 'Lord' means in the Bible

- Q1:** Can you explain how the term ‘Lord’ got to be so important?
- Q2:** Can you explain why the term ‘Lord’ was applied to Jesus and what that means?
- Q3:** Can you say why “Jesus is Lord” is good news or ‘Gospel’?
- Q4:** What is the process of learning to live with Jesus as Lord? *Begins with a ‘D’*

Application

- Q5:** How do you learn to know the mind and heart of the Lord Jesus? Can we research this?
- Q6:** When have you had to prioritise your submission to Jesus as Lord over your own natural policy and preferences? Can you share about this?
- Q7:** Have you been part of a congregation, community or church seeking the mind of Jesus on an issue? Did the process rise above human factors, economics and politics?

Reflection

Q8: This list of questions was suggested as issues that get in the way of seeking Jesus as Lord.

- What does the/my culture say?
- What do I want?
- What am I afraid of?
- What does my life experience demand here?
- What does my professional training say?
- What do I think will work or be efficient or effective?
- What keeps everyone happy?

- a) Can you add to this list of distracting questions?
- b) Which ones are you vulnerable to?

Q9: Are there obvious ways the Church is unfaithful to Jesus as her Lord?

Conclusion:

Q10: Where does this bring you to? *In yourself, as a group, in your life/work etc?*

