

The Greatness of Jesus

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 September 2016

Preacher: Darren Jackson

[0 : 0 0] is that one is that one yeah oh okay thanks uh yep hello my name's darren and that's who you were praying for earlier thanks very much so i don't really need to explain a lot of what i do because you just got it all through prayer so it's probably the best way to find out about somebody um so tonight we're going to look at what on the surface when i first read it seems like quite a harsh passage from jesus he kind of launches straight into a great crowd calling them evil and wicked i don't know if you've ever uh had the opportunity to speak to a crowd of people and think i really want to appeal to the loving nature of god i don't know this is where you might start but actually at the core of it i don't suppose if you hear nothing else from what i say tonight is at the core of it is this message of repentance repentance of returning to god returning in a way that brings new life and actually life in its completeness um so i'm just putting on a stopwatch to make sure i don't stand up here for 50 minutes um and it's something that kind of it's actually brought on a bit of a um i was kind of deliberating as to whether to say this or not kind of brought a bit of a new um meaning onto me this afternoon i spent most of the afternoon with the police because we found one of our neighbors and he'd passed away he died this afternoon um and i was sitting in the flat next door and we hadn't seen him in two or three weeks and sitting with this idea of what's new life look like and what how do you see how do you see because jesus talks a lot about these people looking for a sign and he's not going to give them a sign despite the fact there's been loads of signs and then he starts talking about the way your eyes work this idea that you see but you don't see and i think i sat with the message of the resurrected christ and think do i see day to day there's a message that runs through all of life that is completely counter to the way it's presented to me in my day-to-day life because i think there's two ways of looking at the world there's many ways of looking the world there's but ultimately there's two there's the way god presents his reality and since when you look at me when you look at jesus the lamp it reflects differently into the way you see all things so i look at the police next door and the sadness and i think that's that that's either that and that's we just kind of get on with life or actually there's a way of saying and seeing where god says this is ultimately not the end there's something not right with this but ultimately there's something that god has done about this and even things like sadness i think in my culture and in counseling i work as a counselor a day a week this is probably part of counseling i'm encouraged to tell my clients when there's something that's shaking me so maybe this is exactly what i'm doing um that even something like sadness it points to something within us that i think says something's not right otherwise sadness is completely irrational it points to the idea that there's like an internal compass in us sometimes i think it's the way god has hardwired us to say this isn't the way things are supposed to be that's either completely irrational and evolution will get rid of that one day and we'll be completely discompassionate and just fire on with life or it points to something that says this isn't the way things are supposed to be and i think when we have those thoughts we have those feelings god says yes you're right now what i think that's part of some of the stuff jesus is speaking into so i'm going to quickly pray and then we'll go into it uh father i thank you um that you are present with us you're present with us in our most joyous moments you're present with us in our darkest moments i thank you that you mourn with those who mourn and you rejoice with those who rejoice and as we meet tonight as we think about these words of christ would you speak to each one of us would you speak to us of what it means to come to you to return to you and to see the ultimate sign that you have given i ask that in jesus name amen so jesus starts by picking up kind of a question that's presented to them earlier on in chapter 11 and verse 16 where they're testing him by wanting

signs from heaven and to which gordon spoke about last week and then they accuse him of being evil and wicked and jesus kind of says no actually you are uh and i'm not going to give you any sign and in some respects that's a bit you know disingenuous i don't know if that's the right because

jesus has clearly given them loads and loads and loads of signs in fact a lot of the gospels just present jesus going around life telling this message but then showing it through power and authority by raising people from the dead by turning food into multiple different foods or turning water into wine i mean the gospels are littered with jesus doing signs yet there's something about a particular sign that these people are looking for that he's not going to show them and i think it's this idea personally uh hold on can you no don't don't do that yet it's this idea that i don't want to spoil what i'm about to say because i'm quite excited about this um this idea that we look for a sign from god i know i do i look for a sign from god there's actually more about me so john john's gospel is quite big in this theme that they look for signs but not the miracle maker behind the signs itself they want things to prove something about their own comfort about their own reality so like they're testing god it's that idea and i'm sure you've had these moments yourself i've definitely had those moments if only god would do this then he can have whatever he wants if only god would show me this if only jesus would walk into my room one day personally tell me everything i want to know about life that's when that's when he'll have the whole of who i am but until then i'll play like a 50 50 type of game with them i'll play like a it's like a mexican standoff with god in my heart and in my head and this is a way that we can present ourselves before god where actually he is but like a cosmic grandfather i don't i know that's definitely the way i will think about god in my kind of uh wavery days i just expect him to just kind of do stuff and when he doesn't do it to my whim to my to my moment then i'm like oh nah he isn't who he says he is come on do something do something to get me back on board get me back in your team go on so i personally love reading comic books it's a guilty pleasure or a artistic pastime depends which way you look at it um and i think this is captured in a very particular issue of superman do any of you read superman comics alan great we're in great company then um so there's an issue of superman called peace on earth it was part of a celebratory run of things they did and this story focuses on the humanitarian efforts of the man of steel so one day superman is at christmas he's up and he's with mankind and he sees a woman who's homeless and hungry at the side of the street and he's like well i'm superman i could definitely do something about that so he goes and gets her some food and makes her a meal and then superman decides actually there must be loads of other world hunger superman flies around the world and gauges how much world hunger there is then he decides to fix it he redistributes all the food equally he takes some weapons off the bad guys who are oppressing countries that don't have any food and for 24 hours this comic records superman going around the world fixing all the world's problems may goes back to the fortress of solitude that's where he lives in the arctic in his big ice palace and he goes to sleep and he wakes up the next morning the world has gone back to the way it was one group of people he checks in on and they said what why did you do this why did you take that food and they were like well we realized we could so we did and actually you took that off us and this idea that the comic is presenting superman is left depressed at the end that's the end of the issue superman's like i can do what i want physically about mankind but man is still man and he says this sort of trite phrase and then kind of goes off to fight a villain and i find it quite a personal personally quite challenging because i think a lot of the time i think if you know god gave me the sign god gave me this thing to fix all my problems you know he could definitely do with the rest of the world and this comic is essentially suggesting and there's tons of gospel parallels with jesus and superman which i can tell you about after if you want that's a whole other talk if you ever wanted to do a series sermon on that um about even if you did fix all the problems of man one of the main problems is man himself so jesus could have given whatever signs he wanted and he did ultimately he gives the ultimate sign he is risen from the dead yet the problem isn't just what man want what man sees is ultimately what man wants in his heart this is why he points to the sign of jonah can you go to the next slide please alexander so in verses 29 to 32 we have this first i think um slightly out the blue conversation about jesus talking about jonah and this sign for as jonah was assigned to the ninevites for also will the son of man be to this generation again jonah is an interesting choice from the way i look at what's going on here because in some respects when you think of what the sign of jonah is what is the sign of jonah a whale yeah because in some respects like the people of nineveh which is what jesus goes on to say i mean he holds nineveh up as an example but nineveh never saw a sign in some respect never like god never appeared to nineveh in like a pillar of smoke the sign that nineveh got was actually a message from a man a man who had gone into the depths of a whale because he didn't want to i mean the story of jonah is he actually didn't want to bring this message to these people he didn't think they were good enough he was like well he ran and ran and ran and god caught him put him into the depths for three days and he kind of re-emerged with a

new message to a people who at the time would have been considered the most wicked group of people at the time jesus calls a group of people here in verse 29 a wicked generation none of a were one of the wicked generations of their day and the sign that they had was a man who came with a message of repentance of return return to god and then he holds up another example of the queen of the south which martin told me i was going to use this joke i didn't know how to get in but it's the only mention of a scottish football team in the bible unless you count hearts which we're right as well i'm trying to think of queen of the south's rivals or if that's why you're walking out um and yeah we we come to this idea of the queen of the south which would have been probably the queen of sheba and how she traveled to hear the wisdom of solomon the queen of egypt in all her glory and all her power knew something of the idea of this man having a different type of message so she goes to hear now if you are a jew and you're a pharisee and these two examples are the examples jesus holds up a wicked generation from the old testament and the ruler of one of the most oppressive people that you had escaped from and imagine they wouldn't have liked this so jesus has now called them wicked and he says you need to be more like the ninevites and the queen of the south it's not exactly an easy message for this group of people to hear and it's not a really easy message for us to hear it isn't for me anyway but essentially he's also saying to these people you know you could be like the ninevites this group of people who were considered the worst ever i don't know about you i don't know if you have areas and moments in your life where you think i'm too far from god you know there's things i've done there's places i've been there's things i've thought there's even conversations i've had with god himself which made me think yeah no i'm one of these people one of these places where he cannot reach too far gone you might even have people in your life who think that the response of the people of ninevah the message of the people of ninevah is there's no such thing there's no such thing for this message this message of repentance will not go god sends jonah to some of the most far-off people and calls them home and they hear that message of new life they accept it and they return and the the story of jonah is they repent is that whole city turns back to god but on the flip side you've got the queen of sheba the queen of the south um and in all her excellence and all her power she recognizes another world leader a kind of peer or maybe um somebody she might even see herself in competition with there's something about him the message he has that has life that has meaning can you go on to the next slide please and so you see in her this idea of the best she i mean why would she need help she might think in her power that she has nothing to really get and i know there's other days where i can be like that with god i don't really need him everything seems to be okay i'm completely in control and the message of her response is one of humility humble and seek yourself because actually this god has words of wisdom and words of truth two complete ends of the spectrum one group of people who might think they're too far away from god and one group of people who might think they don't need god this message response of both the sign that they both need is not a sign of wonders and miracles it's a sign of return return to god return to god in the fullness now again repentance is a word we use quite a lot there used to be a guy who walked around campus when um i was at uni he had a big what do you call those things uh sandwich board it said uh sex before marriage equal to hell after death repent exclamation mark and on the back he said stop having sex or something like that um now there's elements like a lot of these things there's elements of truth and some of that but actually he completely reduced the christian message down to one behavior which you know if you stop doing that one behavior you're going to be fine and think often that's the way i will think about repentance it's like i'll do a moral checklist of my life and the ones that are the big bads i'll definitely not do them and if i don't do them i'm kind of okay as opposed to this idea of the wicked generation who constantly look to god for self-serving reasons and actually need to return away from that to a god of life a god of resurrection because again a reduction of the gospel for me is you're just really bad people and jesus has died for you so behave and be grateful that's the center of the gospel as opposed to this message of god has created things to be a way return to the way those things are supposed to be and actually they will return to those things can you go to the next slide please alexander because ultimately these outsiders become judges like they stand in condemnation of the people of israel the people who thought they were in will suddenly find themselves judged by the people who thought were out it's a kind of jesus says this will happen things will return to me they will be good again and it's all through this idea of repent return to jesus who resurrects his death is the thing that brings union and resurrection bringing new life repentance isn't just something i do on a bad day it is definitely that also but it's actually a position of my life where i need to continually return it's part of the what the word means it

means turn return your thinking return your thinking to the reality what reality do you see the reality you make up the one you demand of god of the one that god presents to you to me through his son and says come home return to the way things are meant to be the people of nineveh did it they did it by repenting to a message the queen did it by seeking

the idea that we seek to hear and listen to the wisdom of god himself and then doing so we find new life so actually maybe you don't find yourself uh with the kind of powerful queen who thinks she knows everything maybe you don't find yourself as the um distant outsider who's really awful but maybe actually we might be more as a church i'm not talking about all of you personally but i mean the church generally of being the middle group the crowd who are listening to this message who think they're on the inside and actually you know they're just demanding things of god do this for me jesus prove yourself to me prove yourself to us god if you're real do this this and this and that message to repent and to seek his wisdom is just as key for me it's just as key for all of us as it is for the outsiders and the people who we think wow they're on the fringes of society or the people who we think are in hyper powerful jobs i know when i sit with some of my richer friends um the ones who went on to follow the career i studied and they never did um some of them gently remind me my parents do anyway um i can believe that message that you know they're fine they're in control you know i can't find that in where the you know where's the life crisis where i can present god because that's really the only place he has i suppose he's king over all things so even queens of powerful nations will come and seek what he has got to say so they're going to do it shouldn't maybe i too shouldn't maybe we could you go to the next side please so we're going to move on to the next section first i thought these sections are kind of just you know random sayings of jesus collected and you know here we have another one but actually this idea if you repent because jesus then presents himself i think in verse 33 no one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden or under a bowl instead they put it on a stand so those who come in may see the light jesus is the lamp jesus is the light i think that's what this passage is saying you cannot repent unless you look to the very thing the very light that causes that again i can make repentance and about my own behavior and be a better person i'm supposed to look to this light that redefines reality you don't hide it i want to hide it and i want to kind of put it away and i think in john chapter three could you go on to the next slide please in john chapter three jesus says this and this is the judgment the light has come into the world but people loved the darkness rather than the light because the works were evil for everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed but whoever does what is true comes to the light so it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in god there's something about the light that instinctively makes me want to run away so when i look to the light when i look to the light of christ and his perfection and his love and his compassion and his mercy and all the words that we can attach to the brilliance of who jesus is there's something within me that actually makes me want to hide in the darkness because it's exposing the things that i keep in the dark whether in my mind whether in my life there's a vulnerability about presenting them if i was going to tell anybody here you know in my darkest day here's what i did naturally i'd be having questions of trust i'd have questions of insecurity of being judged of all that stuff you'll know them yourselves the places we fear most that the light will come in we can have the temptation to run further into the darkness we have an area of darkness and light is presented it can push us further into the darkness but if that light is christ if that light is the lamp that lamp

[20 : 22] is the one which john says earlier gave himself then it's to be fully trusted fully accepted it's a light that doesn't send you away and go hey no i don't like you you're done you're like the ninevites off you go i don't want heaven to do with you it's a lamp that when we look at it it enables us to actually repent it enables us to return because it's one of sacrifice it's one that gives himself for us again that's often the way i fail to see jesus in my day-to-day life i see him as either vaguely in the corner kind of keeping an eye on things or um yeah forget he's even there half the time as opposed to this idea of repent return to me because you can trust me i've got your back i've died for you but not just died for you i've resurrected to bring you new life walk in the reality of that new life so we look at the lamp when jesus says we look at this lamp he then starts to talk about how we then see the rest of reality verse 34 your eye is the lamp of your body when your eyes are healthy your whole body is full of light but when they are unhealthy your body is also full of darkness see to it then that the light within you is not darkness therefore if your whole body is full of light and no part of it is dark it will be just as full of light as when a lamp shines it is light on you so verse 34 tells us that an eye is healthy and is described in a spiritually healthy way of looking at things as a bad eye

is a spiritually unhealthy way of looking at things i know the longer i take my focus off jesus i start to see the world differently i start to see about mainly my goals and my priorities or my hurts or my anger or what i want no these things are irrelevant and i should just ignore them but it starts to become the lamp if you want a kind of dark lamp i didn't like the the way i think about it is in photography when you have those dark lamps they illuminate what is in the room but in a different way than a bright light would they still show vaguely what you're looking at but it develops if you'll allow the analogy to go it develops it in a different way um whereas the light jesus shines shines reality and that reality can be uncomfortable sometimes that's the whole point of repentance it exposes us but it also shines the reality of love and it's this idea of when you look it fills you with light in a way that it then expresses its light through the rest of your body um and after all this talk of condemnation and judges judging the section actually finishes with a pretty positive way of looking at the world if you look at the message of christ therefore if your whole body is full of light there's no part of dark it'll be just as full of light as when a lamp shines on you and expresses itself sorry expresses itself that's not what it says oh you can take that as my translation of what it's saying there's a way actually when you look at jesus and look at the fullness of who he is what he's done and what he continues to do what he continues to bring in life it actually fills us with a truth reality not just of thoughts but of your position before god of your position in his kingdom of identity and of meaning and when you live that way i think this passage is suggesting that somehow then shines out like a lamp it has this knock-on effect of when you live in the reality of god it starts to shine in the world the bible's full of analogies and messages of in philippians where paul talks about shining like stars and yeah it's not going to draw too many parallels where they don't exist but this idea that you know god's message for us of repentance isn't just about a little self-help project you know you repent become a better person and that's the end of the story but as you do that that light will then shine it will that's the kind of the almost promise

here if you look to the lamp of jesus it fills you with light in a way that shines it's a world that needs a message not just because they've done certain bad things but because each generation is a wicked generation in some respects but in terms of what they do but ultimately in their position and heart before god like what made this generation any more wicked than nineveh or any more wicked than today it's still the same problem we demand god as our servant as opposed to recognizing god as our king god as our father god ultimately who expresses himself as christ as our friend and as our brother but recognizing also that involves returning repenting to seek can you go to the last side please so this is just to end what sign do you see what sign do we all see because ultimately we have the sign of jesus's death and resurrection on the cross historically as an actual event that we can all look back to it's recorded for us we speak to one another about it we attend church services about it we sing about it we can study it but do we see at the core what it's about john 20 29 says jesus says to the disciples because you have seen me you have believed but blessed are those who have not yet seen me yet have believed either jesus was just mistaken there or he is saying something about the reality of when we look at him and what he has done and we see we are blessed to believe it's again like him it's not that god can and won't come and do miracles he still does he's a god of where his spirit is free to roam the world this is his world but ultimately those things are not the point the point is himself of what it means to see him the miracle maker behind the miracles themselves and then finally like jonah we will show you i like i don't have time to go into this but i love the character of jonah in some respects is this man who's kind of broken by god and kind of as he is resurrected almost he goes into the depths he is brought back with a message of new life to a group of people who respond even though he doesn't really want it to happen i mean jonah you read it in your own time he's kind of left in a kind of challenging place with how he responds but as a model and what god is up to there it's a foreshadowing of christ himself but also it's what christ does in us he takes our life and takes it into the depth with him and in that place brings newness and says then go go with this message go with this message full of light because i've actually when you look at me you're reminded of who you are you're reminded of reality and that infuses you with light so go go into this world because something you can rely on there's something actually if we don't rely on this we've got very little else to rely on you can make up as you go along make up your own reality but we'll get into a pattern where we have to change it every three or four years until it fails i know that's what i tend to do i can even do that with my own faith sometimes i'll just this bit's uncomfortable so i'll throw it away and i'll remake it and each time i think god's grace and mercy extends to everybody and says repent return to me change your thinking

look at the lamp again remind yourselves of who you are but ultimately remind yourself of the lamp himself because he is the one that brings newness of life so who will you let define you what light do you let in what light do we all let in i think one of the biggest challenges for me is i think i need to go and do this all by myself part of community part of being in a relationship with one another is we speak words of light into one another we show words of light into one another we ultimately have through the scriptures the source of light embodied in the message of christ it's also a message for the light whilst exposing the darkness at the same time says you're way way way more loved than you could possibly imagine i'll take that as a sign to end so jody's going to come back up aren't you and as you sing and as you respond whatever way you want to respond i would leave you with that question what light do you let in we all let light of some form in but the ultimate light the one that is quite jarring and can be a bit jagged around the edges is also the one that says come come closer i know this feels vulnerable i know you don't like it don't be like adam and eve when they realize what they've done they've run and hide even though god's saying where are you like the most futile game of hide and seek in all of eternity he knows exactly where they are it's an opportunity to come again but our tendency will be to run further into the darkness i'm going to quickly pray is that right jesus i thank you for your message of hope that this call to return to you is so much more than just how we feel on our worst day but the way we see all of reality itself i apologize and repent of the times where my reality is about fitting you into doing what i want and just getting things so that i can remove uncomfortable stuff and just have things the way i want it but help us to look to your light to the lamp the who is christ not just as a problem solver in a practical sense but actually fixes the greatest problem that mankind has in our heart but a god who also does actually fix that and then brings new life and calls us to walk in the reality of that and walk in the freedom for that of us and so i pray that tonight father if there's places where any of us are feeling constrained and trapped you'd bring freedom when we look at that light but there's places where we've become complacent or our own little gods that when we look at the lamp we would be humbled and to seek your wisdom in the way the queen did i thank you father that you're good i ask god in jesus name amen and my father and i'm just gonna come in to the finish and i answer that good