

The Trustworthiness of Jesus

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Date: 28 February 2016

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[0 : 00] If you find that helpful, it would really help me if you keep Matthew 9 open as we look at that together. Let's pray as we begin. The crowd was amazed and said, nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.

Father God, as we come to your word this morning and look in on events that have changed the world, help each one of us to encounter you in the power of your spirit.

Please open your word to our hearts and open our hearts to your word. In Jesus' name. Amen. The staff team are reading a book at the moment.

We're reading a book called The Happy Christian. Ian Futter saw it on my desk, The Happy Christian. He said, oh, they found him, have they? And I guess that's quite telling of our impression of Christians.

You do get happy Christians. Sometimes we wonder if it's kind of in spite of them being Christians rather than because of it. I think there is a related problem when we read the Bible.

[1 : 11] It's that we want to steal the show when we read it. We want to make it all about us. I used to listen to sermons and kind of my gauge for whether it was a good sermon was, has it told me what I have to do?

And I used to think things like, make it relevant. But really what I meant by relevant was, tell me what I have to do. I was Mr. Moralism, falling back into the default mode really of wanting to do things to show God that I was worthy.

And we all have that kind of Mr. Moralism side. It's because, I guess, in the Western world, we're all kind of hardwired to believe that life is all about what I do.

And that if you do things well, you get rewarded for them. So when we come to the Gospels, these accounts of Jesus' life, I am amazed by how often when I read them with a friend, they start to put themselves into Jesus' shoes.

So we're reading it and this great conviction comes. People go, oh, and then Jesus did this and, oh, I've got to do more of that. And then Jesus, oh, he wasn't doing that. Yeah, well, I'm always doing that.

[2 : 19] I need to stop doing that. And then this happened to him. Gosh, that needs to happen to me more. But the problem is that one of the keys to happiness in life, one of the keys to happiness as a Christian, is that we stop thinking about what we've got to do and we fix our eyes on what Jesus has done for us.

There is plenty in the Bible about what we have to do. It's not hard to find. But the fuel that we need in order to serve Jesus, the motivation, the passion that we need to live for him, only comes from focusing on what he has already done.

for us. So it's a bit like when you open the Bible, in one sense, we've come to the theatre to gaze at Jesus on stage and see this incredible heroic story of what he has done for us.

We're directly involved because we're affected by his actions. But the Mr. Moralism inside us keeps wanting to get on the stage and says, I want the spotlight. Stop looking at him.

What about me and what I'm going to do? And the truth is we can't do it. Jesus came into the world because the job that mankind faced to put ourselves right with God was an impossible job.

[3 : 32] And so Jesus came to do it for us, to make the results available for us, to receive from him and enjoy and build our lives on. And if we grasp that, then we'll cheer up.

So when we read Matthew's Gospel, who are we in the story? We're not Jesus. We're very much the people he's saving. Often you can read yourself into that and think, well, that's happened to me in a similar kind of way.

We're always the crowd watching. Jesus has walked into our life like that crowd in those days. We're watching him at work. And the question Matthew wants to keep asking us is, will you trust him?

Will you trust this man who I saw do these things? And we see this morning just how trustworthy Jesus really is. We begin with two beggars. Our first point, Jesus meets two beggars.

Trust his global reach. So imagine you're in the crowd. You're listening to Jesus. He's just been teaching through parables about wineskins. And then suddenly there's this commotion and a man arrives in verse 18.

[4 : 34] Have a look. While Jesus was saying this, a ruler came and knelt before him and said, my daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her and she will live.

So parents, dads, put yourself in this man's shoes. He's a ruler. He's an important man. I think in Glasgow you have this phrase for men like this that I've been learning.

He's a high hedion. Is that right? He's important. He's probably not bowed down to anybody for a very long time. He's powerful, but he doesn't have power over death.

And his precious little girl has died. I don't know what you think are the biggest problems in the world today. Of course there are lots, aren't there? I was reading in my newspaper this week about Lily Cole campaigning about illiteracy.

And of course that's a problem, a big problem. In Beirut there are riots because there is a river of rubbish running through Beirut because they can't clear it into landfills. People are rioting.

[5 : 44] That's a serious problem. But we take for granted death. We cannot imagine a world where human death doesn't happen.

And yet whatever you choose to build your life on, whether it's your career or your family or your money or your house, whatever you choose, death will come and it will make a mockery of it. Three years ago, you know, I used to live basically until I was about 30. I lived functionally as though I was basically immortal. I never thought about death. Never talked about death. Three years ago, I got diagnosed with a brain tumour and for the first time in my life, I had to think through what it would be like to die.

And I felt as a Christian, I had strong hope for after I die. But I had to think about my girls growing up in a world, we had two at the time, without their dad. Death is a horrible thing.

We know that, don't we? Even when it's people we don't know. Even when a famous person dies, a kind of friend you never knew, this year we've had Alan Rickman, David Bowie, there's this sense of loss and we never even knew them.

[6 : 51] And one thing I knew about Glasgow moving up here was the way Glasgow grieves as a city for those lost in the Cluva tragedy, that helicopter accident.

And over the bin lorry crash, just a year later, we grieve because death is horrible. Surely, if you were to find a solution to the problem of death and the grief it causes you, you would do anything. You'd give up anything to get hold of it. And this ruler, he knows that Jesus can help. So he comes and he humbles himself, a powerful man, on his knees because there are some things that human authority just can't help you with.

So what does Jesus do when he sees a man hurt by the cruelty of death? Verse 19, Jesus got up and went with him and so did his disciples.

As we've seen over the last few weeks, Jesus has the power to help. He is willing to help. Now at that moment, the scene changes rather abruptly because we find this second desperate beggar.

[8 : 05] Verse 20, Just then, a woman who'd been subject to bleeding for 12 years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, If only I touch his cloak, I will be healed.

The first girl is dead. Presumably, her father wants to get on with getting Jesus to her and there's this interruption. Jesus allows himself to be interrupted.

This second girl, in a sense, she's dead as well. She's had to live with this bleeding for 12 years. She's spent her money on doctors and never got better.

She's religiously unclean under the old covenant that they lived under at that time, their relationship with God. She was religiously unclean. Imagine living in a religious society where because of what's wrong with you physically, nobody can touch you and nobody can even sit where you've sat or lie where you've laid.

Imagine going through that for a week. It would be awful shutting yourself away. Imagine if for 12 years she was dead. And again, this is somebody who's seen enough of Jesus to know he can help

me.

[9 : 19] She comes up behind him in the crowd. She reaches out. She breaks the rules by touching him. I guess Jesus could have been annoyed by that. But he's not, is he?

In verse 22. Jesus turns. He saw her. Take heart, daughter, he said. Your faith has healed you. And the woman was healed from that very moment. Now Jesus turns from the woman he calls his daughter, take heart, daughter, to the ruler's daughter.

Verse 23. When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, he said, go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.

The crowds that Jesus sends out are a mourning crowd. They're wailing in sorrow over what's happened. Death is the great barrier. The sentimental talk when someone dies about how they're just in the next room is a cruel lie.

[10 : 23] And so how shocking what Jesus says to them. It's so outrageous, isn't it, that the people laugh. I guess the people laugh in the way that if I was conducting a funeral and said, oh, stop crying, the person in there, they're not dead.

They're just asleep. They're going to wake up any moment. People might laugh but they'd laugh in a really angry way. Outraged. Laughing in shock that someone would have the audacity to say something that is so cruel.

Cruel unless you have this power. Verse 25. After the crowd had been put outside, Jesus went in and took the girl by the hand and she got up.

Jesus has come to bring hope in the midst of despair. And what really matters for us this morning is that we mustn't think for a moment that Jesus just came to raise this one girl to life.

Matthew's accounts of these miracles, they're so brief. I'm left wanting to hear more. I want to know more about what happened but the reason they're brief is because he wants us to think about them together. And if we know our Bibles and Matthew hopes that we do know our Bibles, this series of miracles shows us that Jesus has come not just for this one girl but to smash death to bits forever.

[11 : 45] Jesus has been establishing himself as God's long-awaited, expected king. His rescuing king. The bereaved can come to him and he gives life. Then the next thing, the blind men come to him and he gives sight.

Then a man who can't speak comes to him and he can sing for joy. And 700 years earlier, the prophet Isaiah, we heard it at the start of the service, he described the joy for God's people when the Messiah would eventually come.

Isaiah 35, Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer and the mute tongue shout for joy.

And so the blind men, they know exactly who this is. Matthew tells us through their words, verse 27, who do they call him? Son of David. This is the king in David's line, the one whose salvation is for the whole world.

This is him. Finally, he's arrived. So I don't know what you turn to when you're having a bad day.

Usually there's something that we take solace in when we're a bit stressed or feeling a bit negative.

[12 : 57] I was talking to somebody about this last Sunday evening at our evening service and she said, coffee. As long as I know there's good coffee, I can kind of reach for that and I know I'm going to get through this.

For those of us who are particularly emotionally immature, we pin our hopes on a sports team and that's really stupid because they're so unreliable unless you sport Barcelona.

You go for them and they let you down. For others, maybe it's you get out to the cinema or you get the DVD box set on and you follow your friends in the latest episode of your DVD series.

Maybe it's a good book. Maybe it's alcohol. Maybe it's drugs to get you through. But those things, they are escapism. They are a way of thinking, things have got just a bit too pressurized for me right now.

I'm going to draw back into this escapism that doesn't really exist. Well, for centuries, if you'd lived in Israel and you trusted God's promises, when things went wrong, you'd have thought, I know that one day the Messiah is going to come.

[14 : 05] One day, Isaiah's promise is going to be fulfilled. He's going to come and he'll put things right. It will be like the great days of old when Elisha was here and Elijah was here.

One day, he's going to come. And then we see Jesus raise this little girl to life. And Matthew wants us to know that day has come. He is here for us now.

So this week, if you want a distraction because your life is getting too much, don't go to what's not real. Go to what's more real than what you can see around you.

Read Isaiah 35 again. Jesus has come once. He will come again. And those days that we're still waiting for, when death is at an end, they will come.

We know they'll come because we've seen him. In these miracles, Jesus shows us what the world will be like when he comes in glory. And I think it would have been hard to believe 2,500 years ago if I was a Jewish boy, a Jewish man, 2,500 years ago, I've got these promises from 200 years before that Isaiah made.

[15:13] They just sound too good to be true. Is this really going to happen? Generations have gone by. And you might be feeling today it sounds too good to be true as we look at the Bible.

But Matthew would say to us, I saw this. Will you trust this man? We saw him do this just as it had been promised. Will you wait in hope for him to come back?

No matter how bad the world gets, Jesus is going to win. He showed us that day. That's our first point. Jesus meets two beggars. Trust his global reach. But if Jesus is going to put the world right on such a grand scale, what about me?

How do I know that he's going to be interested in me? That's our second point. Jesus meets two blind men. Trust his individual concern.

The dramatic day goes on. Let's pick things up in verse 27. As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, Have mercy on us, son of David.

[16:19] And look at the way Jesus treats those two men. When he'd gone indoors, the blind men came to him and he asked them, Do you believe that I'm able to do this?

Yes, Lord, they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, According to your faith, will it be done to you? And their sight was restored.

He doesn't mean that their healing depends on the degree of faith they've got. What he means is, Because you trust me, I will make you see.

So this theme we need to focus on here is the love that Jesus has for people personally. Just think back. When the ruler arrives, Jesus is busy teaching.

His teaching is important. John the Baptists have come all the way to see him. They want to know the answers. And then he sees the ruler's faith on his knees. He gets up and goes with him.

[17:23] When the woman touches his cloak, he's on his way to raise a girl to life. His disciples are with him. He turns round. He talks to the woman. Take heart, daughter.

The same words that he used to the paralyzed man. Do you remember that? Take heart. Look at the way Jesus uses human touch to show his affection. In verse 25, he doesn't need to be with the girl to raise us a life.

We know that. But verse 25, he took the girl by the hand and she got up. Verse 29, these blind men, they've never seen Jesus. They're blind.

He touches the eyes of the blind men. And did you notice as well how generous Jesus is when it comes to people's faith? Several of the people in these accounts are really mixed up actually about Jesus.

The ruler says, my daughter has just died, but come and put your hand on her and she will live. But we know already from chapter 8, Jesus is more powerful than that. Because when the centurion came about his servant, he said, just say the word and my servant will be healed.

[18:29] What about the woman who's been bleeding? She knows Jesus is powerful, so she sneaks up and touches his clothes. She doesn't go and meet him and say, I'm a sinner.

God is good. I accept what you're going to do for me. Please forgive me. Her understanding is all mixed up. It's almost as though she's superstitious about Jesus' power.

If I just touch the clothes, I'll get the power. Then in verse 32, the demon-possessed man, well, he can't give his testimony. He can't speak to Jesus. He can't speak.

He's brought in to see Jesus. Verse 33, and when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. Each time, the faith seems to lack something.

Each time, you can trust Jesus. All that matters is that the people know they're in need and they call out to Jesus because they know he can deal with that need.

[19:24] I remember when Barack Obama first got elected as president and there was tangible hope around the world that this man would make the world a better place. and you'll have your own verdict on that.

But my friend Mark, who's an English guy, was so amazed by Obama. He went to America to help with the presidential campaign, to help get him elected. And he talked to me about the victory rally that he went to with Obama and he queued for 24 hours with his friends so that they could be near the front to see Obama come out and address his followers.

And there was this huge party and Mark said to me when he got back from America, he said, it was unbelievable. It was unbelievably good. But he never met Barack Obama. He's never met him. He's never had an individual encounter. Well, we see here that Jesus truly is the saviour of the world. He demonstrates his global reach. He's dealing with the great enemies of humankind, of death and suffering.

His mission, we saw last week, is to forgive people of their sins. But he also deals with every one of us personally, individually. Every Christian can say, Jesus Christ died for me.

[20 : 39] It's not just that he died for the world. He loved me. He gave himself for me. If you turn to him and you call out to him for mercy and forgiveness, he hears that cry.

And you shouldn't be worried if you have some doubts about Jesus, as long as you keep holding on. Doubts don't disqualify you from being saved by him. Or perhaps if you worry that you're battling against sin and you just don't seem to make any progress in the battle against sin and you feel really convicted about that and think, well, maybe I'm not really a Christian.

Well, the question is, have you thrown in your lot with Jesus? Are you sorry for your wrongdoing? Have you asked him to forgive you? Well, then, he is concerned for you personally, enough to give himself for you.

That's his mission. And we're reminded of it next. We've seen two beggars and then two blind men. Our third point is Jesus meets two reactions. Trust his single-mindedness.

Matthew tells us how people react in all three scenes. I don't know whether you noticed that. Verse 26, news of this spread through all that region. Verse 31, but they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.

[22 : 00] Verse 33, the crowd was amazed and said, nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel. And so we see here one more aspect of how much we can rely on Jesus, how trustworthy he is.

We can depend on him to fulfill his father's mission even when people stand in his way. Now perhaps the most obvious group doing that just now in Matthew are the Pharisees.

Jesus is putting the world right here as a time of joy and yet how chilling that Matthew ends the section with verse 34. But the Pharisees said, it is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.

Jesus knows that to continue his mission is going to lead to immense personal suffering at the hands of his enemies. But nothing will stop him.

He will face the agony of the Garden of Gethsemane as he looks ahead to the next day and what he will endure on the cross as he stands between us and the wrath of God.

[23 : 05] He will pass that test. He carries on. There is also another threat to his mission. Not just the Pharisees who stand against him but the men who are blind.

Did you notice that? Have a look at verse 30. Jesus warned them sternly see that no one knows about this but they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.

Jesus doesn't want the news about him to spread at this stage because people don't yet understand his mission. They want a Messiah who is going to come and overthrow the Romans to free them from the enemy that is oppressing them.

they haven't yet grasped that the Messiah they need is one who will deal with the enemy within deal with their sin. They want one who will fight for them not one who will die on the cross for them.

They want the king without the cross. The glory for Jesus without the suffering. And so if people find that out about him and they come to him there's a real danger that they'll try and give him the power and the glory before he has gone to Jerusalem and suffered and died.

[24 : 16] It's just what the devil tempted Jesus with back in Matthew chapter 4. All of this can be yours. Just bow down and worship me. And here again Jesus resists.

He stays on mission. We can trust him to go to the cross because he knows there's no other way that God the Father can keep his promises for our future.

And likewise we can keep trusting him today having seen what he did having seen that he stayed on mission. It's easy to lose hope today when we see the persecution of Christians around the world but we can trust Jesus' promise that he will build his church.

It's easy to lose hope at the direction the world is going in but we can trust Jesus' promise that he will come and bring a new heaven and a new earth. The hard work has been done now. And as we finish these different reactions to Jesus that day they help us think about how we ought to respond. First there's the Pharisees and the challenge for us I guess very obviously is don't be like them.

[25 : 26] these are people who see the true goodness and compassionate miraculous loving saving work going on right in front of them and they say this is wrong this is from the devil.

They don't deny the power but they won't accept his authority over their lives. Why not? Why not? It's because they're self righteous. And for us in Glasgow today we might not be religiously self righteous in the way they were but are we in danger of sometimes refusing to accept Jesus' words because we're so convinced that we've got it right.

We are surrounded in our city by people who will say that Jesus' teaching is wrong that it's socially regressive especially when it comes to things like his teaching on marriage and family people will say this is wrong but that's self righteous to stand in the judgment seat over Jesus to think in Glasgow we've worked it all out our moral framework is unchallengeable by Jesus.

Well look at Jesus in Matthew's gospel and we see him demonstrate that he is God's long awaited king that's who he is so will we listen to him and let him rule over our lives?

Will we accept that his words are always good words even when he disagrees with us? More positively let's learn from the crowds and just the first few words there are verse 33 the crowd was amazed and said so they marveled and they spoke could we ourselves respond like that to Jesus?

[27 : 16] Could we marvel at him? recognize that there are some problems that we cannot fix no matter how much we back ourselves and that wonderfully Jesus has come into the world to fix them for us marvel at him and like the crowds that day let's speak of him speak of him to one another speak of him to the world not just speaking of church not just of God not just of the community and friends we have at church let's be people who speak of Jesus try and get Jesus into your conversations at the coffee machine at the water cooler with friends he's coming back to smash death to bits trust that his mission has a global reach that everyone needs to hear about he loved and touched and saved these individual people trust that he died for you personally and he never let anybody take him off mission so trust that he will see it through now by coming again in glory to judge and to bring a new world he is marvelous he's worth sharing let's pray together take heart daughter he said your faith has healed you and the woman was healed from that moment heavenly father we thank you for the trustworthiness of your son the lord jesus help us by your spirit to let him take center stage to marvel at him so that we depend on him lean on him and go out into your world as happy christians ready to serve him and to share him with others in jesus name we pray amen well let's remain seated we're going to have our prayers now let's pray together father we thank you for the beauty of this day the sunshine and the colour and the brightness thank you for the lifting of our spirits which comes with the sun but thank you too that your sun can river kurt which is icon