

2. Standing before the Son of Man

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Preacher: Bob Fyall

- [0 : 0 0] Now let's pray together. Guilty, vile, and helpless we, spotless Lamb of God was He. Father, we praise You for this wonderful good news of the Gospel, how the Son of God became one of us, that we might become one with Him, how He left the glory of heaven and came down into the darkness and into the troubles of this world to give Himself for us and for our salvation.
- And Father, we know that amidst all the other problems of this world, amidst all the difficulties that we face as individuals, as communities, as nations, that we need, first and foremost, to be right with You.
- Until we are right with You, our relationships with others are always going to be wrong, always going to go askew. We pray as we consider this great story again this afternoon, as we consider the story of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us, that indeed our hearts will be warned, that You will give to us listening ears, You will give to us obedient hearts, so that we may leave this place.
- If we don't know You, we pray, Lord, that we may know You by the time we leave. And if we do know You, we pray, Lord, that You will quicken our faith, that You will encourage our hearts.
- [1 : 3 3] Father, we thank You. This is not just a message for the people in this room. This is a gospel for the nations. We have a gospel to proclaim good news for all throughout the earth.
- And we pray, Lord, that You will give to us increasing confidence in this life-changing word, the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.
- Each of us comes from different circumstances, different backgrounds, families, work, home. But we know that in Your riches in glory in Christ Jesus, You are able to meet all those needs.
- And so as we open Your word, we pray indeed, Lord, that You will open our hearts to that word and speak to us. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.
- Now in the Bible, so we are on page 883. Two weeks ago, we began this short series called The Savior Who is Christ the Lord, which is in which we are studying some parts of Luke's story of the cross.
- [2 : 4 3] And two weeks ago, we looked at the prayer in Gethsemane and the arrest of Jesus. And we take up the reading now at verse 54 of Luke 22.
- Luke 22, verse 54. And I say that's on page 883. Then they seized Jesus and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house.
- And Peter was following at a distance. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, This man also was with him.
- Peter denied it, saying, Woman, I do not know him. A little later someone else saw him and said, You also are one of them. But Peter said, Man, I am not.

And after an interval of about one hour, still another insisted, Certainly this man was with him, for he too is a Galilean. But Peter said, Man, I do not know what you are talking about.

[3 : 57] And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.

And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

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

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, If you are the Christ, tell us.

But he said to them, If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you, you will not answer. And from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.

[5 : 05] So they all said, Are you the Son of God then? And Jesus said to them, You say that I am. Then they said, What further testimony do we need?

We have heard it ourselves from his own lips. This is the word of the Lord. Those of you who have read The Boy of the Dawn Treader or seen the film in the Narnia series may remember the wonderful opening sentence of that book.

There was once a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb and he almost deserved it. And one of the problems about Eustace Clarence Scrubb was that he had a very prosy and literalistic mind.

Everything had to be cut and dried. Every problem had to be solved. Every question had to have a simple answer. At one point in the story, someone says to him, Eustace, do you know what a star is?

And he says a star is just a great mass of clouds and gas. And the reply is, Eustace, even in your country, that's not what a star is.

[6 : 27] That's only what it's made of. And that's always seemed to me to be a good principle of interpreting scripture, indeed of interpreting life. Not just what something is made of, but what actually is the deep meaning.

Now this passage is made of three very nasty elements. First of all, we have denial in verses 54 to 62.

We have mockery in verses 63 to 65. And we have prejudice in verses 66 to 71.

That's what the passage is made of. Denial, mockery and prejudice. A very unpleasant and unwholesome mixture. But what is the passage?

What is the passage actually saying? That's what it wants us to look at. Now I said two weeks ago, each gospel tells the story of the cross. But tell it from their own angle, so to speak.

[7 : 27] It's a consistent, unified story if you read all four gospels. And yet each of the gospel writers tell us in his own way. I said that in Mark, for example, the utter isolation of Jesus is emphasized.

No one speaks for him. No one stands up for him. No one comforts him in any way. Now Luke is rather different. Not that Luke denies all this.

Not that Luke denies the loneliness and the suffering. But in Luke, there are other cross currents flowing. In the passage two weeks ago, an angel from heaven appears strengthening Jesus.

On his way to the cross, some women are going to come and comfort him. And most staggering of all, as we'll see in two weeks' time, one of those dying along with him acknowledges who he is.

Because you see, Luke is forcing us to ask the question that he's raised at the beginning of his gospel. To you is born today in the city of David a saviour who is Christ the Lord.

[8 : 35] Now saviours don't usually act in this way. Saviours are usually people of power, people of standing. Not people who end up arrested in a garden, insulted, mocked and taken to a cross.

Is he the saviour? Is he the one in whom God's purposes of salvation find fulfilment? Is he, in fact, as verse 69 says, is he the son of man?

And in particular, this story of the cross flows from the end of chapter 21. From the words of Jesus on the Mount of Olives.

21 verse 36. He says to his disciples, Stay awake at all times. Praying that you may have strength to escape all those things that are going to take place.

And to stand before the son of man. That's why I'm calling today's passage, Standing Before the Son of Man.

[9 : 37] Will we be able to stand before the son of man? And looking at the, so we're going to look at these three parts of the passage.

But we're going to look at what underlies them. First, remember, there's denial, there is mockery, and there is prejudice. But let's take this first, the story of denial, verses 54 to 62.

Another way of putting this is that Jesus, the son of man, demands loyalty. The opposite of denial, surely, is loyalty, standing with.

Now this is a sad story. And focus is on Peter's panicky denial. Now what is happening? Now we can dismiss one idea straight away.

Some people have argued this shows that Peter is not a true friend or a disciple. Now later events prove that that view is simply impossible. So what is there for us to learn from Peter's denial?

[10 : 40] From the fact that Jesus demands loyalty. There are times when our loyalty will be severely tried. There are times when we will be tempted to say, I don't know the man.

I have nothing to do with him. The circumstances are very real. You notice how Luke builds up the picture. This is something that's happening. Verse 56, verse 55, kindle the fire in the middle of the courtyard.

Peter joins them in the cold night. And then the servant girl looking at the faces around the fire as the firelight flickers over Peter's features.

This is one of the Galileans and disciples, isn't it? Verse 56, she looked closely at him. It's very detailed, very eyewitness, very circumstantial.

Peter is clearly intimidated. Why? I think it's true to say that Peter was overconfident. Back in verse 33, Peter had said, Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.

[11 : 46] Jesus said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me. Now, Peter meant it when he said in verse 33, I'm sure, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.

But he spoke it in brashness. He spoke it without thinking the consequences. Has that ever happened to you? Certainly happened to me often enough. I've made sort of brash claims, brash claims that I could not live up to.

Remember what the old hymn says, stand up for Jesus. Stand in his strength alone. The arm of flesh will fail you.

The arm of flesh has certainly failed me a lot. So he says, his first denial, he doesn't know Jesus. Now, of course, we may not have said in so many words, I don't know Jesus.

I have nothing to do with him. But how often silence is a denial? How often when Jesus is mocked and the gospel is traduced, we keep a cowardly silence?

[12 : 58] Then he denies that he's a follower. In his second denial, he denies that he is a follower. And in his third denial, he claims complete incomprehension. I don't know what you are talking about.

Peter is a good man. Peter is a genuine man. Peter is going to go on to be a shepherd of the flock. But Peter is also a human being.

Brash, rash, over ready to claim too much. Verse 57. I do not know him.

See, ironically, that is true. He didn't know Jesus deeply enough to realize who he was. The other tragedy was Peter didn't know his own heart either.

That is the problem. And his action fulfills Jesus' words. Peter the rooster will not crow this day until he deny three times that you know me.

[14 : 03] And notice how the healing process is already beginning in verse 61. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. These dramatic words.

Just imagine how, just imagine the drama of that moment. The Lord turns and looks on Peter. He doesn't see anything. Just those eyes, those familiar eyes looked at Peter.

No doubt with a mixture of heart, disappointment, and yet tremendous love. He still loved Peter. And he was going to bring Peter back.

Fascinating, actually, when you read at the end of John's Gospel, Peter denied Jesus three times. And Peter is given the opportunity at the end of John's Gospel to undo that threefold denial.

Jesus says three times, do you love me? And Peter is able to undo that denial. You see, the point is this.

[15 : 02] In us, there is the temptation to deny Jesus. In us, there is the temptation to deny we know him or understand him. And see, as often by cowardly silence as by actual denial.

And Peter, like most of us, was terrified of what people would think. Terrified of public opinion. Terrified of losing face. And when that happens, we are going to deny as well.

Isn't that true? So the first thing is that Jesus demands loyalty. Remember the denial and the parallel. Jesus demands loyalty.

Now in our second section, we have mockery, verses 63 to 65. What's this telling us? This is telling us that Jesus must be taken seriously.

There's a longer account in Matthew and Mark with some more dreadful details of the beating and the insults. But Luke here is emphasizing what is said.

[16 : 10] Luke here is emphasizing the intimidation. Luke is forcing us to consider the claims of Jesus. Can this be the Son of Man? Can this be the Savior of the world?

So there's first of all insults and ridicule. Now the men who are holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. Mocking him.

Mockery is a pretty dreadful thing, isn't it? We don't face persecution to any extent at all in this country. But there is a great deal of mockery.

A great deal of ridicule of Christ and of his gospel. A great deal of the sense that if you are a Christian, if you are a believer, the kind of words that are used, the kind words used, the words like fundamentalist and flat earther and so on.

These are among the kinder words that are used. Remember these are the people of whom Jesus is to say, Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing.

[17 : 15] Oh, they were guilty, but they didn't initiate this. They were driven along by public opinion and, of course, by the power of Satan himself. And they are actually fulfilling Jesus' own words in chapter 18, verse 32.

They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, plug him and kill him. You see, all the time that this is happening, all the time when they seem to be in control, they are actually fulfilling the words that he's spoken.

Insult and ridicule. But there's something else. Verse 65. They blasphemed him. Many other blasphemous things.

They were answering the question, Do you believe that this is Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God? Do you believe this is the Son of Man? This was their answer. Of course he's not. They blindfold and cast out, prophesy.

Who is it that struck you? They treat this as a trivial and blasphemous game. The kind of thing the media is very fond of. And the thing you get had in various films and so on over the years.

[18 : 26] The life of Brian, the last temptation of Christ. A few years ago, Jerry Springer's vile and blasphemous opera on the life of Christ. Jesus was mocked then.

Jesus is still mocked and blasphemed. There is, and the point about the word blaspheme is, this is more than insult. Insults are very unpleasant.

Insults are nasty. Insults hurt and wound very deeply. But the word blaspheme means that they are insulting God himself.

That is the tragedy here. It's so easy not to take Jesus seriously. This is getting us really inside this passage, isn't it?

There is denial, which means that Jesus demands loyalty. There is mockery, which means that Jesus must be taken seriously.

[19 : 25] We'll enter our last section, verses 67 to 71. And here we have the third thing, which is prejudice.

We come very much to the heart of what the passage is about. In this passage, Jesus is brought before the Jewish leadership.

He is brought before the priests and the scribes, and particularly before the high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. And this is going to the very heart of who Jesus is.

Who is this son of man? And the action centers around two questions and two replies. Prejudice, the opposite of that, is that Jesus demands worship.

Not only if he demands loyalty, not even demands to be taken seriously. That's true, of course, of human beings. Many human beings deserve loyalty and deserve to be taken seriously.

[20 : 27] This is more. This is something more. And there are two. First of all, is he the promised Messiah? Is he the one?

If you are the Christ, if you are the Messiah, if you are the one promised through long ages, tell us. And this goes back, of course, to our title, a Savior who is Christ the Lord, a Savior who is the Messiah come from God.

It points forward to the end of the story in chapter 24. Did not the Messiah, did not the Christ suffer these things and then enter his glory?

And Jesus' reply shows that he knows that their invincible prejudice will condemn him. Verse 67. If he said, I tell you you are not going to believe.

And if I ask you, you will not answer. These men are driven by invincible prejudice.

[21 : 32] They are driven by no evidence will change their mind. No arguments will convince them. They have made up their minds. They are invincibly prejudiced.

But he said to them, from verse 69, From now on, the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.

If they knew their Old Testaments, and they should have known their Old Testaments, they were teachers of the Bible after all. They would have read in the book of Daniel, One like a Son of Man came in the clouds of heaven, and took and received the kingdom from the ancient of days.

But notice the phrase here in verse 69, From now on. In other words, he is not only going to reign then, he is already reigning.

He is in charge. This is characteristic of Luke. Luke is showing this is not simply the one who is to be Lord. This is the one who is Lord. This is the Son of Man.

[22 : 39] And as such, he has a unique relationship with God. He sits next to God as equal. They all said, Are you the Son of God? Then he said unto them, You say that I am.

And of course, this I am, which you get so often in John's Gospel, that really is echoing the name of God, Yahweh, the divine name in the Old Testament. I am who I am.

You see, that means that he is going to be the judge. On that day, Jesus stood before Annas and Caiaphas.

But the day will come when Annas and Caiaphas stand before Jesus. That's going to be a day for us all, is it not? That's what the Gospel says, that God will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has appointed.

So you see, this story, with an unpleasant mixture of mockery, denial, and prejudice, is actually a ringing call for loyalty, for taking Jesus seriously, but above all for worshipping him.

[23 : 54] That is the critical point, really. When Jehovah's Witnesses come round the door, and we've often been visited by them in the last few months, I used to argue with Jehovah's Witnesses.

And I probably won the argument, but I never won any hearts. It's easy to win an argument without winning any hearts. I only ask them one question now.

Do you worship Jesus? Not do you admire him, not do you think he's great, but do you worship him? The question is actually, whose judgment matters to us?

When the crunch comes, whose verdict matters? Is it the verdict of the establishment in church or state? Or is it the verdict of the one who will judge on the last day?

The passage leaves us wondering, whose well done is it that we wish to hear? That's what I believe this passage about. Let me finish with that verse I quoted at the beginning.

[25 : 01] Stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Amen. Let's pray. And God our Father, we recognize within our own hearts, we recognize denial, we recognize prejudice, we recognize this loyalty, we are weak, we are fickle, and we pray indeed that we will rely not on our own faith, but on your faithfulness, and that when the day comes, we may have the strength to escape, and to stand before the Son of Man, in whose name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen.