

What is the gospel? Part 3 – The Character of Christ. Bible Reading John 8.1-11

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Last time we saw evidence that Christ's claims about himself were true, we thought through logically that he was neither a **BAD** man, nor a **MAD** man, but is as he claimed to be **GOD** the Son, and the Son of God.

It is important that we recognise that there is no slippage between what he said and what he was, he was completely congruent.

The sense of 'who he is' is what sets him apart from great men or teachers, Charles Lamb wrote "If Shakespeare was to come into this room we should all rise up to meet him; but if Jesus Christ was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment"

Before we go on to look at what he did and accomplished through his life, death and resurrection – there are a few more things to take note of, so that we don't underestimate the scope of what he did, and also what he teaches us about the Father.

There is so much that we can learn about him, even just from listening to **his friends** as they journey with him and they begin to understand him more, for example

After calming the storm 'who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him'

- Peter's confession '**You are the Christ, the son of the living God**'
- '**You have the words of eternal life**'
- Thomas's confession '**My Lord and my God**'

I think that even the testimony of **his enemies** is compelling: Even as they are trying to trap him they admit that he is a man of integrity, teaching the way of God in accordance with the truth' Mk 12.13

They recognise that he can forgive sins, heal the sick, raise the dead, that he claims equality with God, that no one could do the

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works that he does unless God was with him, even though at the end of the gospel accounts they decide to try to reject him because they want a different kind of king. But even in the accounts leading up to his death, hear the voice of his enemies:

Pilate & wife Matt 27.19 [innocent man](#)

King Herod Luke 23.15 [nothing to deserve death](#)

Judas Iscariot Matt 27.3,4 [betrayed innocent blood](#)

The thief on the cross Luke 23.41 [this man has done nothing wrong](#)

The Roman Centurion Luke 23.47 [righteous man / John Wayne - Son of God](#)

Jesus is so much more than the greatest man who ever lived, it is important for us in laying the foundation for our understanding of the gospel, that we see not only that his claims to deity are true, but also that he is the perfect expression and revelation of what God the Father is like – he said [‘if you have seen me, you have seen the Father’](#) so, if we are to know God, and his plan for us and his way of dealing with us, then we will need to look at the character of Christ.

His character: John 8.1-11, the woman caught in adultery – Let him who is without sin cast the first stone, there are a number of things right here

She was guilty, caught in the act

He drew the attention of the crowd to himself, even guilty he valued her dignity: [compassion](#)

Such [wisdom](#), he didn't berate or accuse, nor did he excuse the sin: rather he says let him who is without sin cast the first stone:

They all leave, they recognise his [moral authority](#) to put this condition on them, they recognised his purity cp v.46 where he asks the people 'which of you convicts me of sin?' none of them do

Thinking about this then we can see that he was the only one that had the right to cast the first stone, instead however he does not condemn her, he shows God's [forgiveness](#) and [frees](#) her from the past, sin & shame – however there is no sense that he condones her lifestyle or wrongdoing. God created us with free-

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will and he treats us with a dignity which, to be honest, we don't deserve.

Similarly we know that in one sense the closer we approach God the more aware of our own sin, weakness and failure we are – Jesus prayed, spoke and acted with total assurance of his relationship with his heavenly Father, he was not undermined by guilt because he is sinless – and yet he is fully human and has compassion and understanding of our lives [Heb 4.14-16](#).

So far we have seen in Jesus both unassailable holiness, and also gentleness, compassion and forgiveness with those who have sinned.

So what is the impression we get of him? Humble, honest, challenging, loving, healing, forgiving, compassionate, genuinely spiritual, serving, fascinating, and wise. Attractive to children – they say that you can fool a fool and con a con, but you can't kid a kid: what I mean is that children often intuitively pick up what grown ups refuse to notice – children may feel as though someone is a phoney or doesn't really like them, but adults will pretend that they do; children loved to come and listen to Jesus, they were often around when he was teaching, and gave him the bread and fish, had his hands laid on them for blessing, cried out Hosanna with the crowds – Jesus was attractive.

This all matters because to fully understand the gospel, to take seriously the claims that Jesus revealed what his Father was like, we have to see what his character is: it gives us confidence that God is forgiving, loving, compassionate, wise and someone who we want to know more of – this is the Heavenly Father that Jesus came to reveal to us, and more than that, to bring us home to. Next week we will begin to look at the work of Jesus on the cross, which made salvation possible.

Bill Bright sums up like this “Jesus proved his divine character through his immeasurable love, a passion never equalled in history. Knowing the depths of human depravity, he nevertheless willingly offered himself as a sacrifice to pay for

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every sin and evil committed by the rebellious human beings he had created. He endured the wrath of his Father towards sin to heal and restore each person who would accept his free gift of everlasting life. Only God in the flesh could so unselfishly love such unlovely creatures!”
Amen.