



3 most
compelling
things
about Jesus.

3 Most Compelling Things About Jesus *(Invite Your One Sunday)*

If we know anything about the God of this universe it is only because He has revealed Himself to us. That is the claim of Christianity, that God has revealed Himself, specifically in the Person of Jesus Christ.

So, today we're going to look at 3 of the most compelling things about Jesus. The 3 things we'll look at briefly this morning are His teachings, His influence and His church.

We'll begin by looking at His teachings.

Teachings - It is often said (with good reason) by both believers and unbelievers alike, "I admire the teachings of Jesus?"

In an interview with author and pastor Timothy Keller, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Nicholas Kristof (who is not a believer) said, "Tim, I deeply admire Jesus and his message, but am also skeptical of themes that have been integral to Christianity — the virgin birth, the Resurrection, the miracles and so on."

And that is the glitch in the teachings of Jesus. Because the teachings of Jesus include what Jesus taught about Himself — that He is divine, that His miracles validated His mission, and that His mission was to come and give His life as a ransom for many. In other words, we can't separate the teachings of Jesus from the identity of Jesus.

So, we're going to look at a small sample of what Jesus taught about His own identity.

This account comes from the gospel of John. Now the Apostle John was one of those people closest to Jesus during his lifetime.

This is Jesus speaking:

John 8:56-59

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." 57 So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Now, here's why they wanted to stone Him, because they were more than familiar with this particular account of Moses:

Exodus 3:13-14

13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

This phrase "I am" is packed with meaning. Saying, "I just am," is like saying, "I just exist." Saying, "I just exist," is like saying, "I have always been. There is no beginning and no end to Me. I am infinite." So, you can see why it was a more than a little controversial that Jesus said to them, "Before Abraham was, I am."

Now, with that in mind, look at this statement of Jesus:

John 10:28-33

28 I give them eternal life,

Now if we pause here a second and just consider this claim itself, it's pretty outrageous, because in order to give you something I have to possess whatever it is I'm going to give you. I can't give you \$1,000 dollars if I don't possess \$1,000 dollars. The other thing is that I have to be willing. I'm glad you're here this morning, but you're not getting \$1,000 bucks. Jesus, on the other hand, is claiming that He can give eternal life, which means He has to possess eternal life within Himself.

and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one.”

31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.

So, if the Father is greater than all and Jesus is one with the Father — that's why they wanted to stone Him.

32 Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?”

33 The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.”

They understood the implications of what He was teaching about Himself — He equated Himself with God. “I and the Father are one.”

Now, this is still a highly offensive claim. Even today people will object. “Are you telling me Jesus is superior to every other religious leader?” No. I'm not. He is. Those are exactly the implications of what He taught about Himself.

Because ultimately, when we enter these waters of the teachings of Jesus, it becomes a worldview issue. Jesus is making specific claims about the nature of reality, by claiming He is the author of reality. This means if we live outside of His definition of reality, then we live in denial of it.

It's even more outrageous than that when we think about it, because what Jesus is really saying is that to deny Him is to deny God.

Now, let's look at why this claim of who He is — God in the flesh — was central to His mission.

Mark 10:45

45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

This is the central claim of Christianity, that Jesus died on a cross for your sins. Whether or not He was actually God in the flesh is crucial to the claim that Jesus died for our sins. If Jesus was just a man, then His life held the same value as any other man or woman, therefore His life alone — even if lived perfectly — wouldn't have enough value to pay for the sins of many. His life would only have enough value to pay for one other person's sins. No matter how great we think we are our lives have no more value than any other person's life.

However, if Jesus was God in the flesh, then His life has infinite or unlimited value and therefore He could pay for the sins of many.

So, if Jesus taught that He came to give His life as a ransom for many, then in order to do

that He would have to be God come to earth, which is exactly who He claimed to be.

That's why people objected to what Jesus taught about Himself.

Mark 2:7

7 “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

- All sin is ultimately against God.

That's why it's hard to separate the teachings of Jesus from the identity of Jesus.

Mark 8:31

31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

That is what Jesus taught about Himself — that He would suffer injustice and murder at the hands of the supposedly righteous, but then He would rise again.

C.S. Lewis, the great Christian apologist, also said — we can't separate the teachings of Jesus from the identity of Jesus. In other words, we can't call Him a good teacher if

we believe He really lied about His identity, His purpose, and what He came to do. Lewis put it this way: “Christ either deceived mankind by conscious fraud, or he was himself deluded and self-deceived, or he was divine. There is no getting out of this trilemma. It is inexorable (impossible).”

The moral teachings of Jesus make no sense without His life, death and resurrection, not only because of what He taught, but because of how He taught.

Luke 4:32

32 and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority.

If we go back to the words of Christ where He claimed “I give them eternal life,” that is a statement that comes with a good deal of authority, because you have to be able to back that up by giving this particular type of life.

The Apostle Paul has a good point:

1 Corinthians 15:17-19

17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. **18** Then those also who have fallen asleep

in Christ have perished. **19** If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Again, this is a worldview issue. If there is something wrong with humanity and that something is sin, a particular state humanity finds itself in, then without the death and resurrection of Jesus, humanity has no escape from that state of affairs.

The teachings of Jesus about the human condition aren't quite as popular as some of His more familiar sayings.

Matthew 15:10-19

10 And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: **11** it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.”

In other words, what makes us sinners (and that's what He's saying here by His phrase “defiles a person”) — what makes us sinners is not environmental but internal, in the heart, the core of what makes you who you are.

12 Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?”

The Pharisees were the religious people of their day. And they were offended because

Jesus basically just said their religious rituals weren't doing them any good.

13 He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. **14** Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

Let's pause here to be further offended by the teachings of Jesus, because as unpopular as this idea is — Jesus is saying that some people are blind to the truth. The Pharisees were offended because they thought they were right. We're all like that — we think we're right and when our view of the world is challenged, we become offended.

Now, here's something interesting about Christianity that you may or may not know, but Christianity teaches that in and of ourselves none of us can find the truth.

We don't discover the truth because we're more honest or more brilliant or more enlightened or more willing than other people. As a matter of fact, there is something in our hearts that not only blinds us to the truth but makes us willfully ignorant of it. In other words, deep down we don't want to know it.

John 3:19

19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

The light exposes us. This is why we're all often offended by the truth claims of Christianity, Christians included. How many Christians make these truth claims in harsh and arrogant tones, which in itself denies the teaching of Jesus to “love those who mistreat you.” There is nothing more heartbreaking than a Christian telling the truth in an unloving way.

But this anger at being exposed is universal. It's why humanity looks for alternative explanations, alternative worldviews as to how things work.

Malcom Muggeridge once said, “The depravity of man is at once the most empirically verifiable reality, but at the same time the most intellectually resisted fact.”

15 But Peter said to him, “Explain the parable to us.” **16** And he said, “Are you also still without understanding? **17** Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled?”

So, Jesus already offended people who depend upon religious rituals to connect them to God. Now He's about to offend people who depend upon their morality to connect them to God. The "God will accept me because I'm a good person" crowd.

18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.

So, here's what Jesus is getting at — there is something wrong with the human heart.

19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

There is something in the human heart that produces various manifestations of these negative external behaviors. The most common way of putting this — the human heart is marred by sin. It's scarred.

This means that we're not sinners because of things we do, but that we do the things we do because we're sinners. If sin is a state of being, this makes it a much bigger problem than just avoiding certain types of behavior. Again, it's not what you do that makes you a sinner, it's who you are.

But not only do your actions reveal who you are, but your thoughts reveal who you are.

Jesus taught that anger is just internal murder; lust is just internal sexual immorality, etc.

Every sin is internal before it's external because it proceeds from the heart. This means our good behavior is still marred by sin. So, trying to make yourself acceptable to God on the basis of your moral behavior is like trying to clean a white shirt with muddy hands.

Let's be honest — Christianity is the most pessimistic religion in the world. It says at the very core of who you are, at the very core of what defines you — you're completely flawed. And you're flawed in a way that you can't self-correct. You are unable. You are utterly helpless, like a moral quadriplegic. You can't make a move. No amount of good works can correct your default. And just when you think it couldn't be more pessimistic, it says, "You're not only flawed. You're even worse than you thought."

Okay, thanks for visiting us today.

But that's not only what makes the answer to this dilemma incredible, but astounding. Christianity says, "You're even worse than you thought," but then it turns around and says, "And you're more loved than you could ever imagine."

Romans 6:23

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It's eternal life in Christ. He is the One who gives it. He gives it freely. He gives it personally. It's in Him. To get it you have to meet Him.

This is where Christianity is unlike any other religion in the world. I'm not saying there isn't any common ground in world religion, but this is what makes Christianity utterly unique.

So, Jesus presents us with two problems — one, we have bad records before God. Two, we have bad records before God because we have bad hearts.

The teachings of Jesus address both of these issues, but it is not what Jesus taught that rescues us from this dilemma, but what He

did. That's the uniqueness of Christianity. It's not about a set of teachings. It's about what this Teacher did — He died on the cross for your sins and rose again to prove that He alone has the power to forgive sins and give you new life.

If Jesus didn't die for your sins, then you still have a sin problem before God.

Most of us don't hear this statement as good news, but the statement — God judges sin — is good news. Why? Who wants to worship an unjust God? If you want a God who doesn't judge sin, then you want a God who tolerates the most unspeakable evil in the world. Who wants that kind of God? God judges all sin, He will not let the guilty go unpunished, but if that is true then we have to face the fact that He judges our sin and will not let our sin go unpunished.

- personal story | relationship that brought out the worst in me which was troubling because I discovered there was a worst in me | "We'd use a different word for it."

Influence

This is where the 2nd most compelling thing about Jesus comes into play — His influence.

The influence of Jesus is not from His teachings, but from His Person. In the gospel of Jesus Christ — in this good news that in the cross God takes care of our bad records and in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus He takes care of the source of our bad records and gives us new hearts — you don't embrace a principle or a concept. You meet a Person.

The best explanation for the influence of Jesus Christ upon this world is His resurrection. We're talking about someone who was so influential that at one time His birth was the centerpiece of human history, as in before He was born and after He was born. B.C. - A.D.

Author Tom Krattenmaker, describes why, as an avowed atheist, he finds Jesus so compelling: "What is fascinating about the Jesus story—what makes it so irresistibly applicable to our unsatisfying pursuits of satisfaction—is the utter lack of material wealth, power, and status he amassed during his thirty-some years on the planet. In the pantheon of towering figures in history, you will be hard-pressed to find any who can match him in that regard."

When you think about where He came from, and the period He lived in — the influence of Jesus Christ upon this world is unprecedented.

James Allan Francis (1864–1928)

"Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, his executioners gambled for His clothing, the only property He had on earth. When He was dead He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Twenty wide centuries have come and gone and today

He is the centerpiece of the human race and the leader of humanity's progress. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man upon this planet so much as that One Solitary Life."

If you look at the history of any communistic regime, the one thing they have all been unable to put down is faith in Christ. Christians have always been a thorn in their side. Author Michael Green writes, "Christianity survived nearly 70 years of militant atheism in the Soviet Union where people like Alexander Solzhenitsyn were put in prisons and mental hospitals for their faith. It was a Romanian pastor who ignited the flame of his country's uprising against the dictator's ruthless regime. The prayer meetings in Leipzig lighted the fuse that exploded East Germany's peaceful revolution. Chuck Colson, former presidential aide to the White House, spent the rest of his life ministering to prisoners in U.S. penitentiaries, while David Wilkerson committed to street kids in New York City, created the most effective drug rehabilitation service in the world. We could not ask for clearer evidence of the impact of Jesus."

But His influence upon this world does not come from His teachings as wonderful as they are. When you find yourself at the end of your rope, unable to overcome a destructive life habit or addiction or some internal hatred or anger or apathy and someone says to you, "Jesus has offered solidarity with the poor and suffering," you don't hop up and down for joy and say, "Finally, I have been set free."

His influence upon this world comes from one simple fact that I proclaim to you — He lived the life you could not live, He died for the penalty of your sins that you could not pay and He rose again from the dead to give you life you could not give yourself — true spiritual life in the Person of Holy Spirit who can be felt and experienced and loved or grieved.

That is the truth of Jesus Christ and that is the truth that sets people free.

I'm not a former drug addict. I'm not a former criminal. I'm not a former Satanic High Priest.

I'm just your average sinner — an incredibly arrogant man who needed to be humbled before the God who gave me everything, the God that I thanked for nothing.

That brings me to the third and final compelling thing about Jesus — a gathering of people who have all claimed to have met the risen Christ. This is what we call the church — the body of Christ.

Church -

The church is one of the most compelling things about Him because the church wouldn't exist without His influence, but the whole idea of church and the why behind church is often baffling to many people today.

We don't gather on Sundays to hear good advice. We don't even gather on Sundays to sing our favorite songs.

We gather because Jesus promised that when we gathered together He would be among us. He would be among us when sing about what He has done for us. He would be among us to hear our prayers. He would be among us to speak to us still — when we gather together.

Have you ever thrown a party, but didn't invite anyone? You just decorated and bought invitations (or an invitation) and

ordered catering and then had a party all by yourself. There's a reason you've never done that. It's not how you were created.

The difference is that when those of us who have believed these promises of Jesus and then in believing have experienced Him, have found that His promise is true — when we gather with other Christians He is more present with us than when we are simply alone.

When a church is no longer experiencing the presence of Christ we refer to that church as a dying church.

The church isn't seen as compelling anymore because its existence is misunderstood. We gather to experience the risen Christ.

During worship you may find your heavy heart lifted or you may find yourself uncharacteristically tearing up. During the sermon you hear a Scripture that seems to land on you with an emotional weight you can't explain. You find your mind troubled by things you never considered troubling before. You find you want to remove things from your life. You find yourself believing. You find yourself saying, "I believe He died and He

rose again for me.” And suddenly you realize that Christianity is not just about the teachings of Jesus, but it’s about a radical event in history that changed everything. And you realize when you turn to the risen Christ, nothing will ever be the same. Ever. It’s a worldview shattering truth.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones once stated to preachers, “You are not simply imparting information, you are dealing with souls, you are dealing with pilgrims on the way to eternity, you are dealing with matters not only of life and death in this world, but eternal destiny. Nothing can be so terribly urgent.”

Some of you are ready for that change. Some of you need to hear more. That’s why we meet every Sunday.

Psalm 51:1-6; 9-10