

Sunday, May 3, 2026 - The Person and Work of Jesus Christ – Pastor John Henry Raskin

The Problem

God is holy—infinately and perfectly holy—and humanity is not.

Our sin is not a minor flaw; it is rebellion against our Creator that creates a vast separation between a holy God and sinful people. No amount of moral effort, religious devotion, or good works can bridge this gap. Every human attempt falls short.

God's Solution

The Gospel does not announce a better human effort. It declares that God Himself built the bridge from His side. That bridge is not a concept or system—it is a Person.

The bridge has a name: Jesus Christ.

Who Jesus Is

Fully God

Jesus is the eternal Son of God—the exact representation of God's nature, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, the radiance of God's glory.

Fully Human

Jesus became truly, fully human—He experienced hunger, weariness, sorrow, temptation, suffering, and death. He entered our broken world from the inside, without sin.

One Person, Two Natures

Jesus is not part God and part man. He is fully God and fully human, united forever in one Person. Only someone like this could save us.

What Jesus Did

1. His Perfect Life (Active Obedience)

Jesus lived the life we were required—but failed—to live.

His perfect obedience and righteousness are credited to all who trust Him.

We are not only forgiven; we are counted righteous in Him.

2. His Substitutionary Death (Passive Obedience)

On the cross, Jesus took our place.

Our sin was placed on Him; God's righteous judgment fell fully on Him.

The debt was paid in full. This is the heart of the Gospel.

3. His Bodily Resurrection

Jesus rose physically from the grave.

The resurrection proves that the sacrifice was accepted, sin was defeated, and death was conquered.

Without the resurrection, faith collapses. With it, hope stands firm.

4. His Exaltation and Reign

Jesus now reigns at the right hand of the Father. He intercedes for His people, governs history, builds His Church, and will return as Judge and King.

Why Jesus Alone Is Enough

The problem of sin requires a Savior who can bear infinite guilt (only God) and represent humanity perfectly (only a true man).

**There is only one who qualifies.
Jesus is not one option among many.
He is the only sufficient Savior.**

Our Response

A bridge only saves those who walk across it.

- **If you have never trusted Christ:
Turn from self-trust and trust in Him alone—today.**
- **If you belong to Christ:
Live daily grounded in His finished work, not your performance.**

If you have questions:

Seek answers honestly—this is the most important question you will ever face.

Key Truth:

By His wounds—not our efforts—we are healed.

UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL – PART TWO

THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we stood before a terrifying truth.

We opened the Scriptures and saw together that God is holy — infinitely, blazingly, uncompromisingly holy — and that we are not.

We saw that our sin is not merely a social infraction or a personal shortcoming.

It is cosmic treason against the Creator of the universe and the rupturing of the relationship for which we were made.

And if we sat with that truth honestly, it left us with a question that presses in on every human soul: Is there any way back to God?

The That is the question we will answer today.

I want you to imagine, for a moment, a vast canyon.

On one side stands humanity — broken, guilty, east of Eden, exiled from the presence of God.

On the other side stands God — holy, just, and the rightful judge of every human soul.

Realize that in between is a chasm that no human effort, no moral achievement, no religious sincerity, and no accumulated good works can span.

The canyon is simply too wide.

Now realize that every religion in the world, at its core, is an attempt to build a bridge across that canyon from the human side.

Some try to build it out of good deeds.

Some out of ritual observance.

Some out of meditation, enlightenment, or self-improvement.

Some out of religious devotion.

But the Bible's verdict is the same in every case: the materials are insufficient. The builders are the problem.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ does not offer us a better set of building materials. It announces that God Himself — from the other side of the canyon — has built the bridge. And the bridge has a name. His name is Jesus.

Hebrews 1:1-3 NIV - In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days He has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also He made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Here, in just three verses, the writer of Hebrews says more about Jesus than most theology textbooks.

He tells us who Jesus is — the Son of God, the exact imprint of God's nature, the creator and sustainer of all things.

And this scripture tells us what Jesus did — he made purification for sins. Today, we need to understand both.

Because the Gospel is not abstract. It is not merely a philosophy or a system of thought.

It is a story — a true story — about a real Person who did real things in real history.

The weight of our eternal future rests entirely on whether the story is true, and whether we have trusted the Person it is about.

This morning we are going to explore three things: Who Jesus is, What Jesus did, and Why Jesus alone is sufficient.

Open your Bibles if you have them and buckle up. We have a lot of ground to cover, and all of it is glorious.

Before we can understand what Jesus accomplished, we must understand who Jesus is.

This is where Christianity makes its most audacious claim. It is the claim that separates what the early Church called the Way of Christ from every religious system.

The claim is this: Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's son from Galilee, who walked the dusty roads of first-century Palestine, who ate and wept and bled and died —

is the eternal Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, the One through whom all things were created, in whom all things hold together, and who is the fullness of God in bodily form.

That claim is either the greatest truth ever spoken, or the most dangerous delusion in human history. There is no comfortable middle ground.

The claim is that Jesus was fully God.

The New Testament is relentless in its insistence on the full and genuine deity of Jesus Christ.

This was not a later development, not a legend that grew over time, not a theological invention of church councils.

It runs through the earliest Christian writings and traces directly back to what Jesus himself claimed.

John 1:1,14 - 1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John begins his Gospel not with the birth of Jesus but with the eternal pre-existence of the Son.

Before time began, before creation, before Genesis 1:1, the Word already was.

The Word was not a lesser divine being, not a demigod, not the highest of created things. He was God.

Colossians 1:15–17 NLT- Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.

Here, the Apostle Paul's language is staggering.

Jesus is not merely a representation of God — He is the express image of the invisible God.

He is not a part of creation — He is the creative agent and ultimate goal of all creation.

Everything that exists was made through Him and for Him. And right now, at this very moment, the physical universe holds together because He upholds it.

Every electron, every atom, every galactic structure is sustained by the will of the eternal Son of the Trinity.

This is why the incarnation we know as Jesus Christ is not a lesser act of God. It is not God stooping to send a representative or an ambassador.

It is God Himself — the eternal Son, the Creator of the cosmos — entering His own creation in the form of a servant to rescue us. To be a bridge back to God from His side.

Now that we have established that Jesus was fully God...

The New Testament is equally insistent on another truth that we must not rush past: Jesus was also fully, genuinely, completely human.

Not human in appearance only. Not a divine being wearing flesh as a costume. But truly, authentically, completely human in every sense.

Philippians 2:6–8 NIV - Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

This passage, which scholars call the Carmen Christi — the Hymn of Christ — is one of the most theologically dense texts in all of Paul's letters.

Notice what Paul says happened. The Son of God, who existed in the form of God — that is, who possessed divine glory and divine nature — voluntarily laid aside the independent exercise of His divine prerogatives.

He took the form of a servant. He was born in the likeness of men.

What does this mean practically? It means that Jesus got tired. He was hungry. He wept at a friend's grave and over Jerusalem. He felt the agony of grief in Gethsemane so acutely that His sweat became like drops of blood.

He experienced rejection, loneliness, physical pain, and the full weight of human suffering.

Jesus was not play-acting. He was not insulated from the human experience. He walked through it — all of it — from the inside, as a human being.

And here is why this matters enormously: because we needed a Savior who was one of us.

The book of Hebrews tells us that because Jesus has been tempted in every way as we are — yet without sin — He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses and to serve as our merciful and faithful high priest.

He is not a distant deity looking down on human suffering from a removed place of safety.

He entered it. He experienced it. He has walked through it ahead of us.

Now, the church has always been careful to insist on both truths simultaneously.

Jesus is not sometimes divine and sometimes human. He is not 50% God and 50% man, as though his nature were some kind of divine-human hybrid.

He is fully God and fully man — two complete natures in one Person.

The Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 articulated what the church has always believed from the beginning: that Jesus Christ is to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.

One Person. Two natures. Fully God. Fully human. Forever.

Why does this matter practically? Because it means that only Jesus can do what Jesus did.

Only one who is truly God can bear the infinite guilt of His creation, mankind.

Only one who is truly man can represent the human race and satisfy the law on humanity's behalf.

The work of atonement required exactly this Person — no more, no less.

If who Jesus is, represents the most audacious claim of Christianity, then what Jesus did is its most scandalous announcement.

And the scandal cuts two ways: it is scandalous to our pride because it tells us we could not save ourselves, and it is scandalous to our sense of justice because it tells us that the innocent Jesus died in place of the guilty, us.

The work of Jesus Christ can be summarized in four acts: His perfect life, His substitutionary death, His bodily resurrection, and His exaltation and reign. We cannot afford to minimize any of them.

1. HIS PERFECT LIFE – ACTIVE OBEDIENCE

We often rush past the life of Jesus to get to the cross, but this is a theological mistake. The thirty-three years of Jesus' life on earth were not merely the prelude to His death. They were a crucial part of His saving work.

Last week we established that the problem of sin is not merely that we have done wrong things.

It is that we have failed to do the right things — we have not loved God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are not merely guilty of wrongdoing; we are also deficient in the perfect righteousness that God's law requires.

This is where the active obedience of Christ becomes indispensable. Jesus did not merely come to die for our sins. He came to live the life we were supposed to live.

He fulfilled every demand of the law of God.

He loved the Father perfectly.

He served others perfectly.

He resisted every temptation.

He walked in complete and unbroken obedience from the manger to the garden, from the garden to the cross.

And in the Gospel, that perfect obedience — that perfect righteousness — is credited to us.

Romans 5:19 ESV - For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

The life Jesus lived is not merely an example for us to imitate. It is a righteousness that has been imputed to us through Him.

You are not merely forgiven for what you have done wrong. You are credited with what Jesus did right. That is the double grace of the Gospel.

2. His Substitutionary Death — Passive Obedience

The cross is where the Gospel reaches its blazing center, and we must speak of it with precision and reverence, because the church's understanding of the atonement is not a peripheral doctrine. It is the heart of everything.

Isaiah 53:4-6 - Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

This text, written seven centuries before the crucifixion, reads like an eyewitness account of it. It uses language that the New Testament writers will later identify as the interpretive key for understanding what happened at Golgotha.

Notice the logic. We went astray. We turned to our own way. The guilt is ours. The iniquity is ours.

But the chastisement — the punishment — fell on him. He was pierced FOR our transgressions. He was crushed FOR our iniquities. The preposition FOR is everything. It means: In our place. As our substitute.

2 Corinthians 5:21- For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This is what theologians call the Great Exchange. The sinless Son of God — who knew no sin, who had never had a sinful thought, never spoken a corrupt word, never taken a disobedient step — was made to be sin.

Our sin was imputed to him. And his righteousness — the perfect obedience of his entire life — is imputed to us.

On the cross, God allowed Jesus to be punished as though He had lived our life, so that through the Gospel, God treats us as though we had lived Jesus' life.

I want you to understand what happened on that cross. It was not merely a display of love — though it was that.

It was not merely a moral example — though it gives us one.

What happened on the cross was a legal transaction of cosmic proportions.

The wrath of God that your sin and mine had stored up across a lifetime — the righteous, holy, judicial anger of an infinite God against infinite guilt

— was poured out, not on us, but on His Son. Every drop of it. Until it was finished.

That word — tetelestai — the word Jesus cried out from the cross, the word translated 'it is finished,' was the word written across a debt that had been fully paid.

Not partially paid. Not mostly paid. Paid in full. Nothing owed. Account cleared.

Romans 3:21-26 - But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Wow. What a glorious piece of scripture!

That word propitiation speaks of wrath being satisfied, of righteous justice being appeased.

The sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God is the propitiation for our sins. The sacrifice that turns away God's wrath from us.

Without propitiation, we do not have a cross that saves — we merely have a tragedy that inspires.

The cross saves because on it, the righteous wrath of God against sin was fully and finally satisfied in the person of His begotten Son.

3. His Bodily Resurrection — Vindication and Victory

But we must not stop at the cross. A cross without a resurrection is merely a hero's death. The resurrection is not a postscript to the atonement — it is its vindication and its proof.

Paul says in Romans 4:25 that Jesus 'was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.'

The resurrection declares that the Father accepted the Son's sacrifice.

The bodily Resurrection is the divine receipt — the heavenly confirmation that the debt has been paid, that death has been conquered, and that the one who died for sinners has emerged victorious from the grave.

Paul is equally clear in 1 Corinthians 15 that if Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile, we are still in our sins, and we are of all people most to be pitied.

The physical, historical, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is not an optional ornament on the Christmas tree of Christian belief. It is the load-bearing pillar of the entire structure. Without it, nothing holds.

Make no mistake. The tomb was empty on the third day.

The resurrection appearances of the risen Jesus were multiple and varied — to Mary, to Peter, to the twelve, to five hundred people at one time, most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote his letters and could be questioned.

The disciples were transformed from terrified fugitives into bold proclaimers who faced martyrdom without recanting.

The evidence for the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ is not thin. It is among the most historically attested events of antiquity.

4. His Exaltation and Reign

According to the scriptures, after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father — a position of supreme authority, cosmic lordship, and ongoing intercession for His people.

As we saw earlier the writer of Hebrews says he 'sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven.'

tells us -

Philippians 2:9–11

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This means Jesus is not merely a savior who did something helpful in the past.

He is the reigning, living Lord of the universe. Right now.

He is interceding for His people before the Father. Right now.

He is building His church.

He is governing history toward its appointed end.

And He will return as judge of the living and the dead.

The work of Christ on the cross is complete and sufficient and it is finished in that sense.

But His work is not finished in the sense that it is still in progress.

Jesus is not inactive. He lives to make intercession for us. He has not retired. He is on the throne.

Now, we need to be direct with something that our culture finds deeply offensive: the New Testament is unashamed in its insistence that Jesus Christ is not one option among many. He is the only option. He is THE way to salvation.

As Peter told those who saw John and himself heal the paralytic at the Gate called Beautiful...

Acts 4:12 ESV — And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

And as Jesus testified of Himself in John's Gospel...

John 14:6-Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

These texts are not the triumphalistic arrogance of a territorial religion.

They are the announcement of a rescue operation in which only one person has the qualifications to save. And the logic is not complicated.

Think back to what we established last week. The problem of sin is twofold: we have accumulated infinite guilt before an infinite God, and we lack the perfect righteousness that God's law requires.

To deal with the first problem, you need someone whose suffering can bear infinite weight — which means you need someone of infinite worth. Holiness. Only God qualifies.

To deal with the second problem, you need someone who can fulfill the law on behalf of humanity — which means you need someone who is truly human.

So you need someone who is both truly God and truly man. That is not a category with multiple candidates. There is only one.

Jesus is not the best available option. He is the only sufficient one. And this is not narrow-mindedness. It is the logic of the problem demanding a specific kind of solution.

This exclusive sufficiency of Christ cuts two ways. First, it demolishes every scheme of self-salvation.

There is no amount of moral effort, no depth of religious sincerity, no accumulation of good works, and no tradition of spiritual practice that can accomplish what Christ alone accomplished.

If you are standing before God trusting in anything other than Jesus — anything: your church attendance, your baptism, your family heritage, your comparative goodness — you are standing on ground that will not hold. The canyon is just too wide.

But second, and this is the glory of it, it means that the one who comes to Christ empty-handed is not turned away. You do not need to arrive with credentials.

You do not need to get your life together first. You do not need to earn your way to Jesus.

The sufficiency of His work means that the only thing required of you is to stop trusting in yourself and to trust in him.

1 Peter 2:24 ESV — He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.

By his wounds — not by your efforts, not by your sincerity, not by your track record — you have been healed.

The healing is complete. The sacrifice is sufficient. The question is only whether you will receive it.

Let me bring this home.

We started this morning with a canyon — the chasm between a holy God and sinful humanity that no human effort can span. We have spent this time together examining the bridge God Himself has built.

The bridge has two pillars.

The first pillar is who Jesus is: the eternal Son of God, who became a genuine human being, joining divine nature and human nature in one Person forever.

The second pillar is what Jesus did: he lived the perfect life we could not live, died the death we deserved to die, rose victorious over the grave, and now reigns at the right hand of the Father, interceding for all who come to him.

The bridge is complete. It has been tested to infinity and back. It can bear the weight of the worst sinner who has ever lived, and it has been offered freely to every human being on earth.

But here is the thing about bridges: they must be walked.

A bridge you admire from a distance does you no good if you never set foot on it. And so I want to close this morning with three words for three different kinds of people in this room.

For those of you who have never trusted Christ:

What are you waiting for? You heard this morning that your sin is real and serious, and that the solution to it is not self-improvement but a Savior. You have heard that Jesus is not merely an historical figure or a moral teacher but the living Lord who died for your sins and rose again. Today — not eventually, not when you've cleaned yourself up, not after one more week of thinking about it — today is the day to step onto the bridge. Turn from your sin and trust in him.

For those who are in Christ:

Let what you have heard today sink into the deep places of your soul. The Gospel is not just the door through which you entered the Christian life. It is the ground you stand on every single day. When your conscience accuses you, when your failures loom large, when Satan whispers that you are too far gone — you come back to the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is your only boast, your only confidence, your only hope. And it is a hope that will never disappoint.

For those who are uncertain:

We will be here after the service. If you have questions — real, honest, difficult questions — bring them. Don't let pride or uncertainty keep you from exploring the most important question you will ever face. We want to walk with you.

Let's pray.