

“Who Is Jesus and Why Should I Care?”

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 & John 14:5-14

One of the best inventions ever, in my opinion, is caller ID. When the phone rings, the identity of the caller is no longer a mystery. Like many of you, I've even got this setup that puts the caller's identity on the TV screen, if I happen to be watching the television. This allows me to know if a call is from someone I know and needs to be answered, or if it is a sales call that can be ignored. If the call is coming from a toll free number, I don't pick it up. If it's from someone I know – or even from someone in an area code where I have contacts, then I answer it as quickly as possible. Caller ID may not be the most important invention ever, but it sure is convenient. It can help us set some boundaries with our time and my privacy, and can give us some peace from survey takers, donation seekers, and salespeople who won't take no for an answer.

When someone is talking to you, you want to know who that person is. This is true not just on the telephone, but in all of life. Before we believe what someone is telling us, we want to know their identity. Are they in a position to know what they are talking about? Do they have good intentions? Are they trustworthy?

This brings us to the question of the day, “Who is Jesus and why should I care?” This may have already been answered to your satisfaction, but for many people it is an open question. Is Jesus someone I should listen to? Do his words and actions have any relevance to my life? What makes him so special? In short, the story of Jesus' baptism gives us the answer: Jesus is the Son of God. He is the presence of God in a human life – chosen, loved and blessed by our Creator. He is the Savior for whom God's people were waiting. If you accept the testimony of the Bible as true, then this is reason enough to listen to Jesus and trust him. But let's look at Jesus' identity a little more deeply.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says that he is the Way, the Truth and the Life. These are intriguing words to describe Jesus, and they suggests some important ways in which he is relevant to our lives.

Jesus is the way. In Biblical terms, a way is a road, a path or a highway. And what do you do with a road? You follow it! Jesus is very practical. He's not an abstract philosopher. He's concerned with the way we live. As the way, he invites us follow him on the road he has walked and actually live like him. That isn't to say we put on robes and sandals and act like it's the first century. It means we will adopt Jesus' priorities as our own, and begin reflecting his faith, grace, compassion, love and devotion to God. Some people are more concerned about believing the right things about Jesus than they are about actually following him. You can find many examples in Christianity of people arguing over words about Jesus while neglecting his way of life. But think about other ways or roads we know. Do you go out there and gaze adoringly upon Interstate 675? Do you praise its construction, argue over its attributes or debate its existence? I suspect not. And if you did, it would be a big waste of time. The interstate is useful to us for one thing – for following to our destination. The practical nature of Jesus as the way is similar. You can argue over details of his life or aspects of doctrine forever and never get anywhere. It's when you follow him by adopting his lifestyle that you make progress

toward the goal of knowing God and fulfilling God's purpose for your life. Jesus is the way, so follow him!

Jesus is the truth. Truth has to deal with reality. It makes a big difference how you perceive the ultimate nature of the universe. What you think is real; what you believe to be true, becomes the foundation for the way you live and the goals you strive after. There are many different people claiming to have the truth, and yet the Bible tells us that Jesus himself is the truth. Now when you find the truth, what do you do? You trust it. You build on it. You act on it. If you think something is false, you don't act on it or follow it. But the truth summons a response of trust and action.

It makes a big difference whether something is true or not. No matter how sincere you may be, or how much you want something to be true, it is either true or it isn't. I was just reading about a situation out in Iowa where someone was passing counterfeit 100 dollar bills. The false money was spent at two different stores. The cashiers at both the stores did their best to inspect the money before accepting it – but it fooled them. It wasn't until later that the police discovered the counterfeit bills were slightly smaller than real one's, had no watermark, and lacked certain other security features. The owners of the stores that accepted the counterfeit bills surely thought they were real, hoped they were real...wished they were real. But that doesn't change the fact that they are fake, leaving those store owners empty handed.

When it comes to the foundations on which we build our lives, it's important that we build on the truth. Jesus invites to follow him, because he doesn't just have the truth – he is the truth. If you have doubts about Jesus, try this. Take him at his word, follow him. Do what he says and live like he lived while he was on earth. You'll find out soon enough that his way works; that Jesus is indeed the truth; that he is the path to God, and that he will bring you into harmony with reality more than anything else ever could. The thing about the truth is this: the truth works. When you live by the truth, things just work out better. Jesus is the truth, so trust him and build your life on him.

Jesus is the life. The word life evokes images of vitality, energy, motivation, inspiration and power. Life is good. Life can be great fun. Life can be a joy. If you call someone the "life of the party," chances are you aren't picturing a grumpy, self-righteous person sitting in the corner passing judgment on everyone. You'd more likely think of someone who is lively, exciting, and fun to be with; someone who enjoys and cares about other people. When you read the Biblical stories of about Jesus, it's clear that this is the kind of life he lived on earth. People flocked to him. Non-religious people flocked to him. He was the guest of honor at dinners and parties. People wanted to be near him. Jesus brought people a sense of new life, of hope, of joy. He motivated them to be better people without passing judgment on them. He inspired them to be all that God had created them to be. Just being in contact with him made people more alive – bringing them life not just on earth, but for all eternity. Connecting with Jesus connects us to life itself! Jesus is the life, so live your life in fellowship with him!

As you choose who you will listen to, and whose ideas and lifestyles you want to emulate, remember that **identity matters**. Of all the people our society puts forth as role models;

of all the self-help gurus, philosophers, psychologists, politicians and celebrities, not one of them can match the identity of Jesus. At his baptism, God proclaims that Jesus is the Son of God, the Beloved; with whom he is well pleased. Scripture tells us that he is the Way, the Truth and the Life. This isn't some kind of abstract theory. When we follow Jesus the way, we find our way to God; when we build our lives on Jesus the truth, we find that his way of living really works; and when live in fellowship with Jesus the life, we will find joy, energy. and purpose – both now and eternally Who is Jesus? The Son of God; God with us. Why should we care? He is the way, the truth and the life. Amen!