

Theme The Boss

Readings John 14:6 - 11, Matthew 21:33 - 42

In the Roman Empire, during the reign of Commodus (180 – 192) a group of confessing Christians appeared before the governor in Carthage. They declared “We are not criminals but servants of our emperor Jesus Christ.” The governor responded “We too are believing men and our belief is simple: we swear by the divine spirit of our lord and emperor and offer sacrifices for his well-being and this you should also do.” The martyrs answered “We know our Lord, he is King of kings and the Emperor over all peoples.”¹

In the days of the Roman emperors before Constantine, Christians faced a terrible time. Not because they were Christians as such – people could follow any religion they wanted as long as they also bowed the knee to Caesar. But because they were Christians, they could only acknowledge Jesus as Lord. If Jesus was Lord, Caesar couldn’t be as well. True stories abound of people in who knew Jesus was the one and only Lord and refused to pretend otherwise.

John Kingsbury was Vicar here before me. I came here as his assistant. I liked John a great deal and he taught me heaps. After I had been here a wee while, I called him “Boss”. He hated it to start with but got used to it over time.

Have you noticed that in the workplace, people will only call someone Boss if they like and respect them? In today’s world we have an aversion to authority. We have this mindset that no-one is better than anyone else and no one will tell me what to do. There is some truth in the first phrase – we are all made in God’s image after all. However most of us are under some kind of authority whether we like it or not.

We all have to pay taxes and obey the law of the land. If we volunteer or are paid employees we have to abide by the policies and procedures of the agency we work for. Married men always have to do what their wives tell them – I wish!

Last week we talked about the Apostles’ Creed being one whole to which each statements contributes. We looked at three metaphors – house, car, orchestra – a safe place to dwell, a vehicle to get us where we need to go and a provider of beauty and richness.

We considered the first section / stanza: belief in God the Father and how that leads us to a life of surrender to God. Anything important I’ve missed out?

Ok so now let’s turn to the second section of the Creed. Actually just the first line of this section contains so much.

I believe in Jesus Christ,
God’s only Son,
our Lord...

¹ Cited by Ethelbert Stauffer in Christ and the Caesars, 216

Working our way through this amazing statement we believe in Jesus. “You will call him Jesus” the angel said to Joseph, who would act as Jesus’ Dad. Matthew 1:21

I’d have picked a really special name. ‘Jesus’ was as common a name as Susan is for my generation of girls or David or John were for boys. In NZ Joshua was the most popular for baby boys from 1999 – 2004.² Joshua means the same as Jesus – it is essentially the same name. It means “Saviour” and “the salvation of the Lord”. For Jewish people a name is never just a name. a name reveals the character, attributes and role of the person carrying that name.

There are at least two wonderful things about the name of Jesus:

It is a human name – our Saviour became flesh and walked among us as one of us. He came into the neighbourhood; our neighbourhood. He understands everything we experience, everything about this world. He has experienced it first-hand. He knows our human condition and he loves us – he knows your human weaknesses and he loves us as one of us. Jesus is our Friend.

The second thing about the name of Jesus is that it is a name given by God because it conveys power. At the name of Jesus every knee will bow; every tongue confess him King of Glory now. His name conveys power to save; to bring salvation. Salvation is life in all its fullness.

Even in the midst of our fallen lives the Lord is making us into a whole people, a healthy people, a loving people. The one who carries the name Jesus is our Saviour. He is the Saviour of all who recognise they need salvation and of many who just glimpse it.

Do you know your need for Jesus and the salvation; the fullness of life he brings, the ability to suffer and still remain a whole person?

I was having a chat with someone recently who told me they sat in church for years and years before understanding that Jesus really loved them. Do you know Jesus as your Saviour? Do you experience his love on a daily basis? If you don’t you might like to tell him that and invite him into your life when you come forward for communion. If you would like to know more about a personal relationship with Jesus, please see me afterwards or give me a call later.

The name of Jesus is a human name that is powerful beyond what we have yet imagined.

What about Jesus surname? ‘Christ.’ Of course Jesus’ human surname was ben Joseph – as far as his community was concerned he was Joseph’s son. It wasn’t until Jesus began to teach and to minister healing that he would contradict this misunderstanding.

² [http://www.dia.govt.nz/pubforms.nsf/URL/Top-baby-boy-names-1999-2014.pdf/\\$file/Top-baby-boy-names-1999-2014.pdf](http://www.dia.govt.nz/pubforms.nsf/URL/Top-baby-boy-names-1999-2014.pdf/$file/Top-baby-boy-names-1999-2014.pdf)

'Christ' has become a name almost interchangeable with Jesus but Christ is actually a title not strictly a name. 'Christ' describes Jesus' role but much more than his role; it describes Jesus' reality, "the essence of his life".³ Christ means Messiah – the one who would come to save, not just individuals, but the nation of Israel.

In Matthew's gospel it is Peter who first states with clarity who Jesus really is: You are the Messiah; the son of the living God. Matthew 16:16

In Luke's Gospel Jesus tells a Samaritan woman who he really is. In a deep theological conversation first he offers her living water; a personal ongoing and life-sustaining relationship. As they go on to speak about worship, Jesus reveals his true identity and purpose to her.

Not only has Jesus come to offer life to individuals. Much more than that! Jesus has come to bring salvation to the whole earth. Remember that the Jews didn't consider Samaritans to be real Jews at all; they despised them. And to this Jewish, seriously immoral woman, this woman who had an expectant heart, Jesus reveals his plan for all of humanity. "I am the Messiah," he declares to her. And she will never be the same again.

Jesus Christ is God's Son; God's only Son. No one else enjoys the same relationship with God the Father as he does. The intimacy shared between these two is something we cannot comprehend much as we try. It is a mysterious part of God's nature as Trinity.

John's gospel really emphasises the relationship between the two of them. Jesus says "I am in the Father and the Father is in me." This is lived out in Jesus life and ministry. He goes on to explain "The words I say are not my own but are from my Father who lives in me. And he does his work through me....I am in the Father and the Father is in me." And the absolute gob-smacking thing is that Jesus invites us into this relationship. He invites us to share in something divine – this special Father Son relationship.

Jesus asks his Dad to include us in their unity; "My prayer for all of them is that they will be of one heart and mind, just as you and I are, Father—that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me." John 17:21

He wants us to share in the unity he enjoys with his heavenly Father.

The last point I want to make is that Jesus Christ, God's only Son, is our Lord. He is our Boss. He is the one to whom we owe our allegiance and trust.

Or is he?

³ Karl Barth, The Faith of the Church, 49

Not all authority is exercised in a healthy way today. We can all think of situations and people who have abused authority. That is where we get the “You can’t tell me what to do” reaction that I spoke of earlier.

Jesus himself had no problem with authority. He willingly subjected himself to the Father’s authority. He only did what the Father told him to and nothing else. He modelled for us the way our Christian lives should be. As he submitted everything in his life to his Father, so we need to do the same to our Lord, our Boss Jesus Christ.

In the parable from Matthew, the word for landowner is Lord kurios. The Father is the Lord who sends the prophets and then his own son. The people will not submit to the Lordship of either and tragically kill the son. But regardless of their actions, Jesus, the cornerstone, is crowned as Lord of all.

God the Father established Jesus as Lord. And Jesus did something to become our Lord. He died and rose again for us. We are his property because he bought us back from sin. He paid the price when we should have.

Some have said that Jesus is Lord of all or he isn’t Lord at all. What does it mean for Jesus to be our Lord today? What areas of our lives do we need to take out of our own hands and submit to Jesus? It is our money, our friendships, our sex lives, our character flaws, our working lives? What things do you grasp or cling to?

One of the earliest oldest creeds contained three words – any guesses? The answer I am told is **Jesus Christ Lord**.

When you come forward for communion, you might like to use this time to invite or reinvite Jesus into your life. Communion is a sacrament. The word sacrament comes from the Latin word sacramentum. A Sacramentum is a soldier’s oath of loyalty.

A Christian is simply a person who has sworn loyalty to Jesus Christ and who keeps that loyalty alive in a vital relationship with Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord.

I invite you to listen now to the Holy Spirit speaking through this next song about Jesus as Lord. The word “Domine” that you will hear repeated means Lord.

Play **Cruce tuam** from Taizé music.

Lyrics:
Crucem tuam
adoramus Domine,
resurrectionem tuam
laudamus Domine.

Translation:
Your cross
We adore Lord,
Your resurrection
We praise the Lord.