

January 20, 2013

# Excellencies of Jesus Christ

John 1:35-51

**BI: Once your soul gets a glimpse of the excellencies of Christ, your life will never be the same.**

Returning now to our study of the gospel of John, you may remember that several weeks ago I intended to speak to you about three characteristics of Jesus Christ that should strike us as glorious and magnificent. The fact is, however, that I was so blown away by the first of those characteristics (i.e. the Accessibility of Christ) that we never made it to the other two. Remember, John's purpose is to help us come to believe - or keep on believing - that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing we may have life in his name. In the passage before us this morning, therefore, John is attempting to do that through the narrative of Jesus calling his first disciples.

If we are not careful, however, we might just skim over this passage as nothing more than a simple narrative and miss what John really wants us to see, Yes, Jesus is calling His first disciples, but more importantly John is setting on display, as it were, some of the excellencies of Jesus that may help us begin to understand who Jesus really is.

It's important also to remember that these simple encounters with Jesus were absolutely life-changing for the men who met Him. And that is a big clue for us that there is something more going on here than just a series of introductory meet-n-greets. John is not just doing a little character introduction to facilitate the flow of the plot that will follow. No, he is actually attempting to reveal some things about Jesus that we ought to know.

Now before we get into the details, let's just take a minute to remind each other about the first question we should ask whenever we read any portion of Scripture. The first question we should ask is NOT *"How does this passage apply to my life, my marriage, my work, my thought-life, or my duties as a parent?"* Rather, the first question we should ask of every passage should be, *"What does this passage teach me about God?"* In this case we should be asking *"What does this passage teach me about Christ?"* That's what I asked this passage when I began studying it weeks ago. And as I read this passage with that question in mind I found three attributes (or Excellencies) of Christ that may help us understand who He really is.

The first excellency of Christ I see in this text is one that we have already discussed, but let's review it briefly just start the ball rolling again. In this passage, the first excellency of Christ I see is...

## **The Accessibility of Christ:**

**Read John 1:35-51**

1. When John the Baptist says "Behold the Lamb of God," Andrew and John run over to catch up

with Jesus while no one else has His attention. When they caught Him, Jesus says, "What do you seek? Andrew and John didn't want to impose on Jesus' day. The questions they had would take time to answer, so they simply replied (v. 38), "Rabbi (which means teacher), where are you staying?" This was probably a polite way of saying, "We really want to talk with you about some things but if you tell us where we can find you later, we can come back at a more convenient time."

2. How should Jesus respond? Savior of the world; Son of God; Sent by the the Almighty from heaven to transform the world in three years. Whose got time for a couple of inquisitive boys? This is what we might expect. And that's what makes this first attribute of Christ so amazing. Without hesitation Jesus looks at them with a smile and said, "Come and see."

3. I'm not sure its possible for us to even imagine how elated; how excited these two young men were to have a personal audience with the Lamb of God? They were actually going to have private "face-time" with the One who was so exalted in the eyes of God that even a great prophet like John the Baptist was unworthy to untie his sandal.

4. Behold the accessibility of Jesus Christ! This is one of the most amazing things about Jesus that we discover in the gospel stories. He wasn't like other important people of His day. He didn't hold Himself aloof. He didn't isolate Himself from people. He put Himself right in the middle of them and let them eat with Him, fellowship with Him, even touch Him. Amazing!

5. Of course the carry-over for us is that Jesus is just as accessible to us as He was to Andrew and John. He is not some deistic God who stands aloof from His creation and never has time for His people. This is the God who left everything in heaven to come to us; to live among us; to be tempted and to suffer as we are tempted and suffer. This is the one who even to this day invites us to open the door and let Him come into our lives to fellowship and enjoy sweet communion. This is the one who bids us to Ask, Seek, and Knock without hesitation or fear of rejection because He is ready to answer even before we call. This is the accessible Jesus. And He remains accessible for all who desire to draw near to Him.

6. So the first excellent characteristic of Jesus that we see here is His accessibility. Second...

## **II. The Assertiveness of Christ:**

1. Read 40-43

2. Jesus was not a responder to His environment. Time and again we find Jesus driving forward and plunging ahead to fulfill the Father's purposes without being encumbered by sentiment, tradition, or any kind of cultural protocol. While it is true that Jesus came to serve rather than be served, the reality is that He is Lord. He is the King of kings, the Ruler of all men. And one of the ways this becomes most apparent is in how he entered into relationship with His disciples.

3. Often when the gospel is being presented in evangelistic meetings it is done in a manner that would almost have us believe that Jesus is like a man sitting at a bus station - hat in hand - hoping someone will come along and accept His invitation to follow Him, or accept Him, and

favor Him with the privilege of making disciples of them. But this isn't how the gospels present Jesus at all. Look at how Peter becomes Jesus' disciple.

4. The first thing Jesus does when Peter meets Him is change his name: "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter). As far as we can tell, these are the first words Jesus ever said to Peter. That's pretty assertive. Pretty bold! And it would be downright presumptuous and arrogant if anyone else had done it. But Jesus isn't just anyone else. HE IS LORD. And that is exactly what the apostle John wants us to see.

5. Peter's original name was "Simon son of John" (Jonah). But Jesus told him, You will be called Peter. It's important to note the *future passive* of the term "you will be called." Jesus is not just telling Cephas what He intends to *call* him from now on. No, He is revealing what He intended to *do* with his life. Think about it. At their first introduction it Jesus made it apparent that He already had a plan for Peter's life.

6. The name Peter means "rock." If there is anything that becomes clear about Peter's life in the gospels it's that he was anything but a Rock. He was impetuous, undependable, impulsive, self-centered. Honestly, he was not fit to lead. But Jesus had a plan for his life. He planned on transforming this relatively useless young man into something great.

7. You know what? Jesus intends to do the same thing with you and me. The term we typically use for this is sanctification. What is sanctification? It is the long process of transforming sinners into the likeness of Christ. If you are a child of God by grace through faith, than God has an amazing plan for your life. He intends to hammer you, chisel you, squeeze you and mold you through every experience of your life until you look just like Jesus. He wants you to think like Jesus and talk like Jesus. He wants you to have the same desires and ambitions as Jesus.

8. The apostle Paul explains this when he says in Romans, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God; to those who are called according to His purposes..." And what is this good? Verse 29 says it is "to become conformed to the image of His Son."

9. You see, beloved, even before you ever met Jesus He knew you and had a plan for your life. David knew this even back in the O.T. In Psalm 139 he says to God, "In your book were written the days that were ordained for me when as yet there was not one of them."

10. No wonder Jesus could be so assertive. He knew everything about Peter's future. He knew every success, every failure, every dumb idea and selfish impulse. He knew every sin Peter would ever commit and yet, upon meeting him Jesus declared this word of hope: You shall be called Peter – "Rock."

11. This is the assertive Christ. And His assertiveness appears again when He meets Philip in verse 43. (Read 43).

12. Once again, we find Jesus NOT sitting around hoping someone will notice Him and be attracted to Him. No. Upon meeting Philip he simply says, "Follow me." "Rank yourself under Me." Turn away from life as you know it and attach yourself to Me. That's pretty assertive! It would be totally inappropriate if he were just another sinful man. On the other hand, however, it's perfectly appropriate if the Person saying it happens to be God; the Word; the Creator; the Light

who is the source of life itself; Deity in flesh. And that's who Jesus is.

13. At the end of His ministry Jesus will tell His disciples, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain" (John 15:16). And this is how a relationship with Christ begins for everyone. He is not sitting, hat in hand, hoping someone will choose Him. Paul explains that God "chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him" (Eph. 1:4). And this is our hope; That in the mystery of His grace God would show mercy to sinners and call them effectually and irresistibly to Himself.

14. So, we see the Accessibility of Christ; The Assertiveness of Christ. And finally...

### **III. The Omniscience of Christ:**

1. Notice here, the progression that is taking place. Andrew takes the news of Jesus to Simon-Peter. Then Jesus finds Philip who tells Nathanael. The news about Jesus is beginning to spread as one person shares what they have seen and heard with someone they know. This is how the church has grown since the beginning.

2. You should know that in the other three gospels Nathanael is called Bartholomew. Let's watch what happens when Jesus meets him. (Read 44-49)

3. If there is any doubt that Philip's meeting with Jesus had a profound impact all you have to do is read v. 45. Philip says, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote..." In other words, "We have found the Messiah!" One short encounter with Jesus and Philip's whole life was transformed. He would never be the same again.

4. However, when Nathanael heard the news, he was a little skeptical: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Notice Philip's answer: "Come and see." Beloved, here is the simplest gospel invitation in all the Scriptures: "Come and see." This is so easy! And we should not hesitate to say it when we speak to unbelieving friends, neighbors, and coworkers. So many people over the last few years have come to Christ at our church simply because someone said something about Jesus and invited the man or woman to church or to their home. Beloved, we are the body of Christ. When people come here to see what Jesus is all about they meet this large family of people who instantly love them and care for them as if Jesus were doing it Himself. Don't hesitate to invite people to "Come and see."

5. Notice the exchange between Nathanael and Jesus (v. 47-48).

6. What does John want us to see here? What does this narrative tell us about Jesus? It tells us that He possesses a kind of knowledge that transcends space and time. He knows everything. Theologians use the term "Omniscient." Jesus not only knew Nathanael before they met, He actually "saw" him under the fig tree when Philip called him.

7. Now that may not sound like much proof to you and me, but watch how Nathanael responds, "Rabbi (v. 49) You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." What else could he conclude? Normal people are not omniscient. And Philip had already told Nathanael that he and Peter and John and Andrew had already become convinced that He was Messiah. All Nathanael needed was a little evidence, and Jesus was all too happy to supply it.

8. So we see the Accessibility of Christ, the Assertiveness of Christ, the Omniscience of Christ, and finally...

#### **IV. The Glory of Christ:**

1. Notice how Jesus responds to Nathanael (50-51)

2. What is Jesus saying? He's saying, "One day you will see me come in clouds of glory surrounded by God's holy angels to take the throne of David and rule over all peoples, nations, tribes and tongues. Why do I think that's what Jesus is saying? Because Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man.

3. To get the meaning of that, as you know, we have to look back at the prophesy of Daniel 7. Daniel writes, "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. <sup>14</sup> "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed" (Dan 7:13-14).

4. This, beloved, is the eschatological glory of Christ. While He lived on earth He offered Himself as a humble servant. But when He returns, He will reign and King of kings and Lord of lords and every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord – to the Glory of God the Father.

5. Do you see it, beloved? Do you see what John wants us to understand about Jesus?

- John the Baptist called him the "Lam of God."
- Andrew met Him and concluded that He is the Messiah (1:41).
- Philip met Him and concluded that He is the one of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote (1:45).
- Nathanael met Him and concluded that he is the Son of God, the King of Israel.
- Then Jesus concluded by explaining that He is the promised Son of Man who will one day come in the clouds with the very angels of God.

6. This is who Jesus is. And these are just a few of the excellencies of Christ. The message is simple: Jesus is worthy of your faith, your hope, your adoration and worship. He is your Savior and He is your God. Trust Him. Believe Him. Offer your life to Him and you will discover that He has already set His affection upon you from before the foundation of the world.

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