

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds: More Pictures of the Lord

This morning we come to the third talk based on John Newton's hymn, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds". We will consider the following verse of the hymn, which I will now quote,

*Jesus! my Shepherd, Saviour, Friend;  
My Prophet, Priest and King;  
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End;  
Accept the praise I bring.*

Before going any further, I should say that this popular hymn is widely used in many hymn books but the words are not always the same in every publication. The above has been taken from a hymn book called "Golden Bells". I intend to cover each line of the verse as follows:

- First line, a believer's relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ
- Second line, three offices that Christ fulfils in relation to believers and mankind
- Third line, the impact that Jesus has on a believer's life every day
- Last line, how these considerations should draw praise to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us now consider in some detail the first line, "Jesus! my Shepherd, Saviour, Friend". As stated above, "Shepherd, Saviour and Friend" imply various aspects of a Christian's relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Jesus my Saviour

The most important relationship is that of Saviour. A meaningful relationship with God can only come about when we trust the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as our own personal Saviour. We acknowledge Him as our Saviour when we recognise that we are sinners and need forgiveness from a righteous and holy God. The Lord Jesus Christ came into this world by way of Bethlehem's manger in order to be the sacrifice for sin that would satisfy a holy God. Having died and risen again the third day, triumphing over death, He became the only one in whom we must believe for the forgiveness of sins.

Unless we come to God in this way, then our relationship with a holy God and His Son is only on the basis that we are condemned and our ultimate end after we die is the eternal place of judgment, the "Lake of Fire".

You might be asking, "How can I trust the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour?" Let me quote from the book of Acts 16:30-31. In a city called Philippi, two Gospel preachers were apprehended and thrown into prison. While in prison, there was a great earthquake which shook all the prison doors open. The jailor in charge was woken by the earthquake and, fearing the worst, prepared to kill himself, because he thought that all the prisoners had escaped. But, not so! Paul shouts out that he should not be hasty. At this point, the jailor asks the question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The reply given is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Believing must be real and from the heart, because becoming a Christian means a complete change of life style. I will develop this later when I come to the third line of the verse.

### Jesus my Shepherd

Taking the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour brings you into a richer and fuller relationship with God as Father and with His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The consideration of the Lord Jesus Christ as Shepherd is a particular happy and encouraging feature of the new relationship a believer has been brought into. The thought of a shepherd is found regularly throughout the Scriptures.

Two of the more well known references are Psalm 23, "The LORD is my shepherd" and John 10, "I am the good shepherd". Psalm 23 has often been a precious encouragement and comfort to believers. Those who have come to

know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour can now with confidence say, "The Lord is my shepherd". In John 10, we find the Lord Jesus talking about His role as the Shepherd. The Lord Jesus spoke about Himself in the following way, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep", (verse 11). Who are the sheep? These are the people who trust Him as their Saviour. The giving of His life was the means by which the Lord Jesus could become the Saviour and the Shepherd of His people. A shepherd, cares, provides, feeds, protects and leads His sheep. This is what the Lord Jesus does.

### **Jesus my Friend**

Although there are no direct references in the Bible where people called Jesus their friend, there are, however, indirect references which I believe allow us to lay hold of such a claim as stated in our hymn. We know from Isaiah 41:8 that God refers to "Abraham My friend", and in James 2:23 Abraham is referred to as "the friend of God". The Lord Jesus in John 11:11 referred to Lazarus as, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps".

In the Gospel of Luke 7:31-34 (New International Version), we find the Lord Jesus confronting Pharisees and lawyers showing their inconsistency about their opinion of God's servant, John the Baptist, and Himself. "To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the market-place and calling out to each other: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.' For John the Baptist came, neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'" The Lord Jesus certainly befriended those that were in need and each of the four Gospels testify to this fact. One thing that marked the "tax collectors and sinners" was their realisation that they were not right with God and they saw in the Lord Jesus Christ someone who was both interested in them and cared enough not to reject them even though they were disliked by the majority of the nation. For an example of this attitude see Luke 18:9-14.

What is the definition of a friend? "One loving or attached to another: an intimate acquaintance: a favourer, well-wisher or supporter." When we turn to the Bible we find in Proverbs 17:17, "A friend loves at all times". A friend is one who remains true in both the good times and the bad times. David and Jonathan are an example of friendship which endured through great difficulties. There are various references to this in 1 Samuel 18 through to 2 Samuel 1. Even after Jonathan's death there came a moment when David said in 2 Samuel 9:1, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" As a result of this, Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, came into great blessing.

Again in Proverbs 18:24, "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother". There may be strife between family members but in this statement from Proverbs we have a prophetic message about a different kind of friend. The friendship seen in the Lord Jesus Christ is greater than that of David and Jonathan. We are told that when we were enemies Christ died for us: now that is real friendship. Friends go the extra mile. The Lord Jesus Christ went to Calvary and into death to bring redemption to a fallen human race. Do you know this Friend?

### **My Prophet, Priest and King**

The second line of our verse brings before us three offices that Christ fulfils in relation to each believer specifically and in the widest sense to mankind. These three offices are summarised as follows:

- As prophet the Lord Jesus Christ represents God to man.
- As priest the Lord Jesus Christ represents man to God.
- And as King the Lord Jesus Christ will reign over mankind for God.

### **My Prophet**

In Luke 4:24 Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country." The Lord Jesus said this of Himself when He was rejected in His home town of Nazareth. The people of Nain saw what the Lord Jesus could do as stated in Luke 7:15-16, "So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us'; and, 'God has visited His people.'" There was a similar reaction when the Lord Jesus did the miracle of feeding 5,000, "Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, 'This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world'", John 6:14.

Acknowledging that the Lord Jesus was a prophet was not limited to those occasions when a miracle occurred; it was also true about what the Lord Jesus taught. In John 7:37-39 we read, "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." The

reaction from some of the people was, "Truly this is the Prophet". My final reference is from one of the Lord's own disciples, Cleopas, in Luke 24:19, "Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people".

Because the Lord Jesus Christ is a Prophet, we should take great heed to His words. To quote one statement made by the Lord from John 14:3, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." We know that He has left this world; therefore we wait the fulfilment of the remainder of that promise.

### **My Priest**

In my opening remarks on this section, I said that Jesus as Priest represents man to God. The subject of priesthood is extensive and is a theme that runs through the whole of Scripture.

Confining our thoughts to the book of Hebrews, the following are some of the features of the Lord Jesus Christ as Priest:

- **Hebrews 2:17** "He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."
- **Hebrews 4:14** "We have a great High Priest."
- **Hebrews 4:15** "We have a High Priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses because He was tempted, yet without sin."
- **Hebrews 7:25-26** "He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens."
- **Hebrews 8:1** "We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." He is there in the place of intercession.
- **Hebrews 10:21** "A High Priest over the house of God."

We see at once that the Lord Jesus in this office has accomplished what no other priest could do. He offered up Himself as a sacrifice; but He is alive. The Lord Jesus is perfect; no sin ever attached itself to Him in any way. But, what does He do for me? He makes intercession! The Lord Jesus Christ intercedes for His people in their trials as they pass through this world, seeking to live God honouring lives. As we face the difficulties, He seeks God's help for us. If we fail in the difficulties of life, then as High Priest He seeks to restore us into the vital living communion with our heavenly Father, so necessary for us every day.

### **My King**

As mentioned above, the Lord Jesus Christ will reign over mankind for God. But is Christ reigning today? In Luke 19:11-27 we have a parable taught by the Lord Jesus. The characters in the parable are as follows,

- The nobleman
- The servants
- The citizens.

The nobleman sets out on a journey to receive a kingdom. Before going he gives responsibilities to his servants so that they might be active in the nobleman's business. However, as soon as he leaves, a message is sent from his citizens saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." This was seen initially in the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ and His crucifixion. It is seen today by the attitude of non Christians to both God and Jesus.

The servants are all busy in service, except one. The one who is not busy loses everything in the end. What is required of Christians today is to be busy for the Lord Jesus while He is absent in heaven. When the nobleman returned, he first deals severely with the lazy servant and then he has the rebellious citizens put to death. So, in a coming day, those who reject Christ will suffer the consequences.

The parable enforces what is true today: that Christ is not yet reigning; but He will one day. Every believer is a subject of Christ's kingdom but today the kingdom is not visible. It is in mystery, or hidden, form and to this end the parables in Matthew 13 teach the mystery of the kingdom. What is very evident in the chapter is that the enemy is very active and the kingdom in its perfection is not yet seen. The kingdom in all its greatness and glory will burst upon this world when the Lord Jesus comes out of heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords.

**My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End**

The third line of the verse of our hymn is the impact that Jesus has on a believer's life each day.

**My Lord**

When you truly accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, then another important aspect of salvation is that your Saviour has become your Lord. In the parable mentioned earlier from Luke 19, the citizens said, "We will not have this man to reign over us". There are similarities between the role of King and that of Lord. The king expects his subjects to be loyal and obedient. A Lord expects the same from his servants. You will have noticed that throughout this talk I have mainly used "Lord Jesus Christ" or "Lord Jesus". It is fairly wide spread in Christian circles today simply to refer to the Son of God as "Jesus". Now if we always do this, we start to forget that He is Lord. The name Jesus, given at His birth, is far less demanding than if we call Him Lord.

Thomas, when confronted with the risen Saviour, simply said, "My Lord and my God", John 20:28. Peter had to learn the lesson that you cannot say "Not so, Lord", Acts 10:14. "Not so" and "Lord" are contradictory. In Mark 8:32, where Peter contradicts the Lord, he was soundly rebuked. So we see the seriousness of being a Christian and not being obedient to our Lord. Are there things that the Lord Jesus wants you and me to do and we are refusing? Are there things in the Scriptures which we would rather not put into practice because it would constrain how we live out our Christianity?

**My Life, My Way, My End**

These three expressions flow from accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as truly Lord of all my life. It is not "my life" any more: what the hymn writer is saying is that the Lord is my life. If I am obedient to Christ, then my life will be a living demonstration of that commitment. When people see how I live, they will see something of Christ.

It is very popular today for people to say, "I have a public life and a very separate private life". But if both are not lived to exactly the same standards, then the only conclusion to be drawn is that the person is hypocritical. For the Christian, home life, social life, work life and any other aspect of life should be exactly the same. If I am morally upright in one, then it should be equally true in every other part of my life. Let us challenge ourselves today about "My Life".

"My Way" is to be the Lord's way. The Bible tells us that we have the mind of Christ, 1 Corinthians 2:16. We are expected to do what He would do, think how He would think, and speak how He would speak in any given situation.

"My End" would suggest that my whole life is for the Lord and when it comes to the moment that I leave this world, either by death or by the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4), I am totally His and secure all the way to heaven.

**Accept the praise I bring**

Finally, in the last line of the verse we are brought to praise. In the consideration of this verse and indeed, the whole hymn, should it not cause our hearts to burst forth with praise from these lips of ours? It is only the Christian that can be truly joyful in this world. We have things to be happy about. People without the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour have no hope and they live in a hopeless world.

My wife and I have been in the habit for many years of starting and ending the day by singing a hymn or two. Hymns that are based on and reflect the truth found in Scripture are a good way to remind ourselves of our Saviour and Lord who has brought us into such wonderful favour and blessing. May the Lord bless and encourage you through this day. Amen.

Let us finish with a verse from TE Purdom's hymn:

*"Our theme of praise art Thou alone,  
Thy cross, Thy work, Thy word;  
Oh! Who can fathom all Thy love,  
Thou living blessed Lord?"*

**Please Note:**

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