

#2. Come and See Jesus, The Only Son of God (13/01/25)

Readings: Matthew 8:29, Mark 3:11, Matthew 16:16, John 11:27, Matthew 27:54)

1. How do you understand the New Testament claim that Jesus is the only Son of God?
2. How do you feel about the New Testament claim that Jesus is the only Son of God?
3. Keith spoke about how Jesus being the only Son of God provided him with clarity/reassurance; in that to know Jesus, is to know God. He went on to say that, “By looking at Jesus, we see the heart of God fully expressed: a God who is both holy and approachable, sovereign yet serving, and infinitely loving.” How do you understand this? Does this align with your experience of faith? (You might want to refer to Jesus in John 14:9 “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father”)
4. In the NT, in his letter to the Colossians 2:9 Paul writes, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form”, and also in Hebrews 1:3 “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being”. Keith claimed that, “It’s a very straightforward litmus test. If it doesn’t look, or sound, or act, or be like Jesus, it ain’t God.” Can you argue, using the Bible (including Col 2:9, Heb 1:3, John 14:9) the validity, or not, of Keith’s claim.
5. Many theologians over the centuries have, often in defence against heresies, had to restate the unique Sonship of Jesus. One theologian, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 in his *Summa Theologica* elaborated on the concept of divine descentance (‘filiation’ is the word used!), explaining that Jesus is the Son of God by nature, while humans are sons and daughters of God by adoption through grace. Discuss the many differences of Jesus’ Sonship with God the Father, and our sonship/ daughtership.
6. C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* explained Jesus as "God's only Son" using the analogy of light from a lamp: just as light emanates from the lamp, so the Son eternally proceeds from the Father, sharing the same divine essence. Discuss how this analogy is a helpful way of expressing Hebrews 1:3 and the nature of Jesus’ sonship.
7. Justin Martyr (c. 100–165) argued that traces of divine truth could be found in other religions and philosophies, referring to Christ as the *Logos* (Word) that illuminates all. He also maintained that Jesus, as God’s only Son, is the fullness of truth and salvation. How might this way of thinking about other religions help you build bridges, and find common ground, with people of different faiths, whilst maintaining the Gospel truth of Jesus’ unique Sonship.
8. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) taught that natural reason allows humans to grasp some truths about God, but full knowledge and salvation come only through Jesus Christ. Discuss this? (You may want to bring into your discussion that all are created in the Image of God, and Romans 1:20). How might these ideas help you build bridges, and find common ground, with people who claim to have no faith.
9. In some current divisive political discourse ‘Christian’ is used in phrases like ‘White Christian’, or ‘Christian tradition’, or ‘Christian nation’, as the opening salvos that go on to denigrate other faiths and their followers (usually either Jews or Muslims). How do we confidently hold on to the uniqueness of Jesus’ Sonship, whilst not aligning ourselves with such hatreds, or further fuelling such divisions. Some thoughts...
 - a. Dialogue and Witness: Engage respectfully with people of other faiths, emphasizing mutual understanding while sharing the Gospel.
 - b. Humility and Love: Reflect Christ’s love in actions and attitudes, avoiding arrogance or hostility.
 - c. Recognition of Truths: Acknowledge elements of truth in other religions while pointing to their fulfilment in Christ.
 - d. Prayer and Trust: Pray for others to come to know Christ and trust in God’s mysterious and sovereign ways.

#1. Come and See Jesus, Our Friend (05/01/25)

Reading: Mark 2:13-17

1. We begin this year reminding ourselves to Come and See Jesus and reminding ourselves to invite others to do the same. To come and see who He is and allow that interaction to impact our lives and the lives of those around us. Before we begin, what do you think of Jesus and who He is?
2. The reading includes a comment on Jesus from the Scribes and the Pharisees. Why do you think the Scribes and the Pharisees disliked Jesus so much?
3. In the narrative of this reading, Jesus and His disciples are sitting and eating with “tax collectors and sinners”. This was not observed with approval from the Scribes and the Pharisees.
 - a. Why do you think the Scribes and the Pharisees disapproved of this event?
4. The Scribes and Pharisees phrased their comment as the question, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”, but it was meant as an insult. What do you think was their intended meaning?
5. The Scribes and Pharisees considered Levi and his friends to be sinners and therefore to be avoided.
 - a. What was Jesus’ response to their comment?
 - b. Did Jesus disagree with the Scribes and Pharisees labelling of Levi and his friends as sinners?
 - c. How did Jesus’ response to Levi and his friends differ to the Scribes’ and Pharisees’ response?
6. Jesus became known as, “A friend of tax collectors and sinners”. This was meant as an insulting label. Why did Jesus seemingly own this label proudly?
 - a. [It is the foundation of the Good News of who Jesus is and why He came]
7. Richard said he has some good news for you for the start of 2025 and then proceeded to say that you are, “greedy, dishonest, impure, unclean, unholy, immoral, a cheat, impatient, a swindler, envious, selfish, unkind, and much more...” and that, “you are a tax collector, and you are a sinner”.
 - a. How does that make you feel?
 - b. Why is this Good News?
 - i. [If you know yourself to be a tax collector and sinner, the wonderful news is that “Jesus is your friend.” And there is no greater friend to have than Jesus.]
8. Richard encouraged each one of us to let the following truth sink deeply into our hearts, minds, and spirits, “Jesus sees you, sees exactly who you are and where you are at and, before anything else, before working with you to restore you to his image, chooses to be your friend.”
 - a. Spend a moment in the quiet allowing this to sink in. Perhaps take turns to speak it out loud.
 - b. Personal reflection – is there an untruth, mistruth, or lie that others have said to you, or you have said to yourself, which this truth can free you from? Ask God to help you.
9. Richard ended by saying that this truth is for everyone and said the following phrases:
 - a. You have never met a person who God doesn’t love.
 - b. You have never met a person who is too “far” that God can’t reach them.
 - c. You don’t know anyone that God doesn’t want to be a friend to
 - d. There is no one, you or anyone else, that God wouldn’t want to hear the words, “you are a tax collector, and you are a sinner, and God calls you His friend”.
 - i. This might be difficult to hear for some of us. I encourage you to spend some time asking God to help you realise this truth for all people. It does not mean that God condones or approves of the pain that someone has caused. It simply recognises the need of every person to have God as a friend.