

8. JESUS' EXCLUSIVE IDENTITY

Matthew 11v27

Over recent weeks we have been spending time on the words Jesus taught us to use when we approach God in prayer: **Our Father in heaven.** (Matthew 6v9) God is personal and transcendent, but He is also the Father of a family. We are the people of God, not isolated individuals. We can call God Our Father in Heaven when we come to faith in Jesus, the Son.

Now we move on to look at God the Son. Our text is Matthew 11v27. **All things have been committed to me by my Father. No-one knows the Son except the Father, and no-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.**" This is one of the most remarkable statements recorded in the Gospels. It highlights the exclusivism of Jesus.

This exclusivism can cause a strong reaction. Sometimes we see this in the first session of Alpha looking at the claims of Jesus. How could Jesus say such things? Who does He think He is?

In fact these are the very questions we *should* be asking. C. S. Lewis wrote this of Jesus: *"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit on Him and kill Him as a demon or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."* ('Mere Christianity.' Fontana. 1952)

Again, on Alpha, we often hear this: *"Surely all religions worship the same God. There are different roads but they all lead to the same God."* Yet Jesus' exclusivism separates us from other beliefs.

However we should not think that Christianity alone makes exclusive claims. Christian apologist Zecharias, was brought up in India with the concept of "many ways" to God, and is a walking encyclopaedia on world religions. He writes: *"All religions are not the same. All religions do not point to God. All religions do not say that all religions are the same. At the heart of every religion is an uncompromising commitment to a particular way of defining who God is or is not and accordingly, of defining life's purpose. Anyone who claims that all religions are the same betrays not only an ignorance of all regions, but also a caricatured view of even the best known ones. Every religion at its core is exclusive."* ('Jesus Among Other Gods.' Word. 2000) Exclusivism isn't some terrible crime only Jesus commits!

So let us to look at this great text, in the first place at the exclusive identity of the Son of God.

All things have been committed to me by my Father.

The “all things” here could occupy us for years! It is much too great a subject for us to tackle adequately this morning. But it most certainly includes all that was necessary to complete God’s plan of redemption. Jesus was equipped for His mission. And most important of all, He was qualified for saving humanity because of who He was and is; He alone is God the Son.

This introduces a fundamental difference between Islam and the Christian faith. It is sometimes said that we worship the same God. But this cannot be true if Jesus is God the Son. Islam rejects this utterly.

Timothy George (Dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University) helps us to understand how fundamental this difference is. He writes of John 1v14: *“This one verse, more than any other, summarizes the Christian faith. The Word that was in the beginning with God, that was face to face with God, that was in the bosom of the Father, this “Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and full of truth.”(KJV)*

This is what Christianity teaches: God Almighty, the one and only Allah (‘Allah’ is simply the Arabic word for ‘God’), took upon himself humanity. But not just humanity. Some translations read, “And the Word became a human being”. That’s too weak. It’s not deep or strong enough. No, the Word became flesh.

“Flesh” is different from “human being”. Flesh is that part of our human reality that is most vulnerable, that gets sick. It gets tired. It experiences decay and death. But this is the stupendous claim the Bible makes, and if you don’t feel the absolute horrible force of this statement, you’ll never understand why orthodox Islam finds Christianity so abhorrent: Allah became flesh. This is a blasphemous thought to orthodox Muslims. But it’s a remarkable claim that Christianity makes.” (‘Is the God of Muhammad the Father of Jesus?’ Christianity Today. February 02)

Jesus is God made flesh. *“In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” (Colossians 2v9)* And therefore everything needed to fulfil God’s plan of salvation is located in Jesus, and no one else.

All things have been committed to me by my Father. *“He is in his own person the key to the fulfilment of the Father’s eternal plan of salvation.” (Peter Lewis: ‘The Glory of Christ’ Hodder & Stoughton 1992)* This lies behind some of the most exclusive claims made by Jesus which cause a reaction!
John 3v35f: *“The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”* John 14v6: *“I am the way, the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.”*

You cannot by-pass Jesus to get to God the Father. He is the exclusive way to God because He *is* God made flesh.

1 Timothy 2v5: *“There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.”* Only through Jesus’ perfect life, atoning death and bodily resurrection can we receive the forgiveness of sins and experience salvation. There is only one way, and that is Jesus. Because of His unique identity He *is* the way.

No-one knows the Son except the Father

There is irony here. Some in Nazareth dismissed Jesus because they thought they knew all there was to know about Him. They had Him boxed and labelled. Matthew 13v 54-58: *“Coming to his home town, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked. “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” And they took offence at him. But Jesus said to them, “Only in his home town and in his own house is a prophet without honour.” And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.”*

How wrong they were! They didn’t know the first thing about Him. *“He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”* (John 1v10,11)

The same is still true today. Many dismiss Jesus after barely giving Him a glance. But in recent years the phenomenon that is Alpha has made a big difference. Alpha gives people an opportunity to look into the Christian Faith and ask their questions. According to the Alpha website over 8 million people worldwide have completed an Alpha Course. We are only too willing to run Alphas wherever there is enough interest, whether it is in a home or a pub.

Yet even those of us who are believers have barely scratched the surface of Christ’s immensity and glory. **No-one knows the Son except the Father.** So great and so glorious is the Son of God that only the Father can fathom His riches of knowledge, wisdom and love. When we come to know Christ by faith we begin to glimpse something of His glory. But the full mystery and depth of Jesus will occupy us throughout eternity.

And no-one knows the Father except the Son.

Jesus claims to have unique and total knowledge of God the Father. This is an absolute statement. Jesus doesn’t say *“No one knows the Father as well as me.”* He says No-one knows the Father **except** the Son.

He doesn’t even say *“No-one knows God except me.”* The language is much more intimate and deeply relational. **No- one knows the Father except the Son.** This is deepest knowledge of all; the exclusive knowledge of *intimacy*.

John Piper: *“The greatest thing that can be said of Jesus’ knowledge is that he knows God perfectly. He knows God perfectly, because he is God. Jesus knows him like no other being knows him. He knows him the way an omniscient person knows himself. “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No-one knows the Son except the Father, and no-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Matthew 11v27) No one but Jesus knows the Father immediately completely, and perfectly! Our knowledge of the Father depends wholly on Jesus’ gracious revelation; our knowledge is derivative and partial and, because of our sin, imperfect.*

Nothing greater can be said about the knowledge of Jesus than that he knows God perfectly. All reality outside God is parochial compared to the infinite reality that God is. What God has made is like a toy compared to the complexity and depth of who God is. All the sciences that scratch the surface of the created universe are mere ABC’s compared to Christ’s exhaustive knowledge of the created universe. And even this knowledge of the created universe is a dewdrop on a blade of grass compared to the ocean of knowledge that Jesus has of the being of God himself. While the universe is finite, God is infinite. Complete knowledge of the infinite is infinite. Therefore to know God as Jesus knows God is to have infinite knowledge.

Therefore let us bow down and worship Jesus Christ. Even if we are impressed by the scholarship of man and the achievements of scientific knowledge, let us not play the fool by trumpeting the wonder of these tiny chirps while ignoring the thunderclap of Christ’s omniscience. Jesus alone is worthy of our highest admiration. Jesus alone is worthy of our trust. He can show us the Father... Follow him. For “in (him) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2v3)” (John Piper: ‘Seeing and Savouring Jesus Christ.’ IVP. 2001.)

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