

“Jesus Christ Himself”
Sermon for October 8, 2017
Text: Ephesians 2:20-21

Build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

The amazing, but indisputably **central fact** of these two verses is Christ Jesus Himself. He is the chief cornerstone. He is essential to the integrity of the whole structure in which, or to which all the rest is joined. It is a fascinating thought that despite this cornerstone defining, or setting the limits to one corner of the building in view—it does not in itself determine the height, breadth or the length of resulting structure! Yet it supplies a fixed point, an extremity and feature of that building—in Christ alone. There is no better picture of the critical dependence, and reliance of all the stones on this one stone! And the purpose of the whole?: to become the dwelling place of God, and not just a storage shed, mind you, but a glorious, living temple: a house made of living stones ***who exist for the glory and praise of God the Father.***

I have eight assertions that I wish to make related to Jesus Christ:

1. He is wonderful . . . the demonstration and proof of the gospel and model for our lives.
2. With Him all things are possible and the best things are inevitable.
3. Regardless of our approach to Christianity (doctrine, experience, or laws and commandments) Our fundamental unity is found in His centrality.
4. He Himself is the essence of His work of atonement and redemption.
5. The greater the testimony of Him, the greater His draw to all men.
6. He is the source of all our joy as well as all our blessings.
7. His being our brother guarantees hope *at every turn*.
8. He is Lord of our Souls.

The main theme of this message the wonder of who He is for all who believe in Him, rely on Him and practice to adore Him. So, I return to the image of the temple of God, composed of living stones (the saints and believers of all time), and declare that there is nothing about this temple as wonderful as Jesus Christ Himself! Nothing.

Point One: He is wonderful. Not even the marvelous whole of that temple compares with the wondrous miracle of Him Who is designated its chief cornerstone! *He is wonderful in His unique character, in His salutary life—biographically and historically speaking, there never was, nor is, nor ever can be such a man as He!* Even many among those who abhor His teaching, and spurn His redemption, have admiration for Him! They admit some of His greatness, but not enough. Jesus is the demonstration and proof of His gospel—in, by and through Himself. *This is so much the case that it is impossible to know what He taught apart from knowing Him.*

- *Demonstration*: He is the truth of God incarnate—full bodied, materially manifested, biologically, psychologically and physiologically as well as spiritually.

Knowing Him is wider, broader than head knowledge. “Come and see” remains the call and invitation—He invites engagement, interaction and personal discovery! **To know Him and the power of His resurrection** is the highest degree of sublime knowledge.

- *Proof:* He is the end of the law as well as the soul of the gospel—perfect, entire and complete. We speak of Him as the great High Priest, set on the right hand of the throne of majesty in eternity—reigning as Lord, forever and ever.

Jesus Christ is the proof of the gospel, the soul of the gospel and the power by which the gospel is spread! Whenever a heart is broken by sin, it is bound up by Him—He converts by the power of God. *If we by grace enter peace and salvation through the gates of **encounter** and **forgiveness**, it is done through and by Him. Accept no substitutes!*

The apostles gave their all for Him because they knew **and loved Him**. The same may be affirmed about the martyrs and confessors who bravely died for knowing Him—for Him the saints have often endured, yea, even rejoiced in the loss of all things. Knowing/loving Him makes souls brave, heroic and enthusiastic! Yes, consecration and enthusiasm come alike from Christ alone. It is by His pleas and prayers that the Kingdom is strengthened and advanced—He looses the power by which these things come. **The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand**. His person, His power move things forward. He is the origin and source of it all, of all the mighty river that flows, that overflows into many streams of living waters which those who are in Him must be! Even His governance is aimed at the advance of the truth of God—it all moves that way, towards that end.

Jesus is the model of our life, trusting God to keep His promises.

Earthly pleasures vainly call me,
I would be like Jesus;
Nothing worldly shall enthrall me,
I would be like Jesus.

Refrain:
Be like Jesus, this my song,
In the home and in the throng;
Be like Jesus, all day long!
I would be like Jesus.

He has broken every fetter,
I would be like Jesus;
That my soul may serve Him better,
I would be like Jesus.

All the way from earth to glory,
I would be like Jesus;
Telling o'er and o'er the story,
I would be like Jesus.

That in Heaven He may meet me,
 I would be like Jesus;
 That His words “Well done” may greet me,
 I would be like Jesus.

Point Two: All things possible. **All power, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.** (Matt. 28:18) And that power, that authority, is our back-up; it is why we must proclaim the gospel of Christ with full assurance: His life-giving word gives life—regardless of our observation, or experience. It may not be given for us to see immediate results, but the results are inevitable *according to His will!* *There is never any power outage with the Lord—not ever.* He is the One who removes tyrants, unseated the powerful and mighty. He overrules the scourges of war, of mass murders, the catastrophes of fire, flood and wind. He breaks down the systems of error—exposes, empties and eliminates them. He guides the fads and currents of human thought—even and especially the atheistic and secularistic ones! ***His means for doing so are infinite, beyond calculation and enumeration.*** God changes men, they cannot resist Him—opposition is futile. And when He comes, and that very soon, He will come in all His irresistible might—divine power *to make all things right, just and true . . . and pure.*

The recent mass murders of Americans in Las Vegas, the distressing suicide of a broken-hearted local lad, school shootings, losses of life in Hurricane Harvey and in Maria in Florida, on the islands, Puerto Rico, in wildfires and rockslides at Mount Rushmore, projected fatalities in the Niger region—although grievous and lamentable do open the doors to ministries of compassion, service, consolation, generosity, all of which show the triumphant goodness of God and mercy. Even as we sorrow at them, we are grateful that they are constrained, limited . . . never worse than the awful thing they are! Our prayer must be that our response to tragedy will swallow up the pain, shock and horror with spiritual healing, and that despair will be met by hope and by the encouragement of a Lord who cares supremely about everything that touches us.

We want a Christianized imagination to see Christ dispensing grace and love! We want to see, to frame, to conceive all things in His terms *and not our own.* Our human understanding is incomplete, partial at best *so thoughts of Him must become prominent: front and center in everything, in every current event and civic matter.* **In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**—that is, not in books, not in schools of philosophy, in the world’s great libraries, or the faculty of famed universities. Jesus is Lord on campus and off campus—by which I mean everywhere. I want to propose that we suffer not just from presumption (thinking we know more that we actually can do) we also suffer from an “analytical fallacy.” By this I mean the approach to knowledge characterized by “breaking things down”—like an exploded view of the latest innovative engine. The diverse parts are all lettered and described on a chart. Yes, this is not an engine! It is only a picture, or view of it—by it we may know the parts, but not the whole.

Point Three: Keeping Christ central. We have diverse schools of approach to our Christian theology (we all have one!): 1. the doctrinal, 2. the experimental and 3. the

laws and ordinances. Each school frames orthodoxy, true faith, or religion, in terms of its preferences, prejudices and perspective. And often times the passion of their adherence results in disputes and division. This is so lamentable. It is lamentable because although each approach is valuable in its own right they have broken with Jesus Christ as their common ground, or center. *They have built elsewhere than on the chief cornerstone!* Against, doctrine, doctrine, we must affirm in Christ alone. Or, taking on the second approach, the experimental, my inner life, experiences and feelings, doubts and fears, despondency, fear, despair . . . exultation, gratitude and hope, can result in looking at my spiritual progress rather than *looking to Jesus*. **Look to Jesus and be saved.** And while it is critical to know the commandments of the Lord, and even more important to obey them (**If a man loves Me, he will keep My sayings.**), there must be personal love to begin with or all is vanity. All the benefits of all three approaches will be ours truly if we live, lean and depend upon **Jesus Christ Alone.**

- Christ is precept, the way, doctrine, and truth. He is experienced, indeed He is “life abundant.” He is the pole star, the first, middle and last . . . He is all our salvation and all our desire always and ever it is Jesus who demands our entire devotion.

We dare not ignore doctrine, underrate experience, or forget His commandments but none should have exclusive dominance over the others—and certainly not over Christ Himself! The personal, living, loving Jesus. **Christ in us, the hope of glory . . . our full redemption . . . our guide, our solace, our help, our Captain and our final victory.**

Fourth Point: Jesus Christ Himself is the essence of His own work. “Jesus is the terror of hell, the delight of heaven and the hope of earth”—altogether and all at once. He is the essence of His own work. Christ gave Himself for me—not an offering, a goat or somebody else. Himself. **He loved me, and gave Himself for me.** Yes, above His crown, throne, and joys in heaven . . . and His very life *that I might live*. It is because He is who He is that He alone is able to redeem us! This act of His makes Him “the object of our faith”: **Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth . . . Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heaven laden, and I will give you rest. . . Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.** I do not need to understand everything to trust in Him, to confide in Him . . . we can personalize our dealings with Him (He is not an idea, not an abstraction, not a historical personage (someone important who once lived and has now died) because **He lives and rules and reigns now.** Peace comes through Him, through Jesus Christ alone. Do note that the work of the Holy Spirit is to testify of Him, to glorify and establish Him. Oh, yes, may Christ be our all in all! Because He is the sum of the whole gospel, He must be our constant theme. **God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.**

- “The more of Christ in our testimony, the more of light and life, and power to save.” (C H Spurgeon, sermon #1388, 1877) **I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.**

Fifth point: Yes, the more of Him, the greater the draw. Jesus is must be the object of our love, too. Gratitude for salvation must be wedded to an intense *personal* affection of the Savior, Jesus. Liking Him is far more important than “liking” on Facebook! He is the embodiment of all that is lovely, pure, true and of good report . . . we are to love His offices, His types, His ordinances, yes, but loving Him most of all that is our rest! And it is because we love Him that we love each other—we need no other reason, or excuse! “We are at one with every man who is also at one with Christ.” (CHS) If Jesus loves anyone, our love must follow His . . . so warm is the fire of our love of Jesus that others may gather round it and be warmed! It is a campfire, not the flame of a single match.

As we live out this affection, we discover that affection and service are united. When we are commanded to love, we are enjoined to serve. But Jesus is the reason, not human sympathy, generosity or good-heartedness. If the whole world were a single alabaster vase, and all its sweetness and glory contained in it, it would be proper for every drop of it to be spent for Jesus. About the woman who did such a thing Jesus said: **Why do you trouble her? She has done a good thing.** Her gesture was affectionate in addition to being personal! She like Jesus and He approved of that.

Sixth point: the joy. Jesus is the source of all our joy. He is also the fount of all our blessings. Of course we find joy in other things, things of this life, and children and home—this joy is of the supreme order: Jesus is to be a preeminent joy!

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace
Streams of mercy, never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise
Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it
Mount of Thy redeeming love

Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be
Let that goodness like a fetter
Bind my wandering heart to Thee
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it
Prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it
Seal it for Thy courts above

Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it
Seal it for Thy courts above

Point Seven: Our heavenly brother. If Jesus truly is our brother, **seated at the right hand of the throne of Majesty**, there is **recoverable hope at every turn**: “His way was much rougher and darker than mine./Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?” The darkness of Gethsemane is as a super nova to us! He left us peace by legacy! He grants us peace by His mercies. **It is in us that His joy makes our joy full.**

Jesus is risen, we shall rise! Hallelujah. The joys of resurrection are superlative . . . and so also the coming glory! This is great, this is grand . . . this is incomparable.

Point Eight: Jesus is Lord. Jesus is, finally, Lord of our souls. His blessed company makes all things more bearable—whether good, bad, or ugly. Martyrs scorned torment, laughed at death for our God is not removed or distant—He walks with us in the fiery furnace! He is our living, loving heavenly Shepherd! With Him is where we long to be: death but breaks our bonds, sets the sufferer free and in all this He is at hand! We may rejoice in worldly things, things that blight and rot and die, but He exults in us—in all who come out of themselves and are found in Him. He reserves for us the highest joys, the best delights . . . and yet it is our being saluted by Him, seeing Him, being embraced by Him that towers over both joy and delight—**IN FULLNESS OF GLORY**. He, our constant and forever friend, Who awaits us with eager anticipation—perfected, sanctified and glorified. Why? Because it is the will of Jesus Christ! **Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold my glory.**

As He prayed, so shall it be.

1. He is wonderful . . . the demonstration and proof of the gospel and model for our lives.
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“If all the graces, virtues, and sweetness which have ever been seen in good men could all be forgotten, you must find them all (*perfected*) in Him.” (CHS) All that is good and great is in Him and our prayer is that all that may be made complete in us! This is what “following the Lamb” truly means—follow the leadership, the example of our Teacher, Guide and Friend. ***Having Jesus in our hearts after this manner is what makes us Christians —this is the fruit of true faith.*** We may lament our present imperfection, and our shortcomings but take courage: *we shall be like Him, when risen from dead, when raised to life eternal . . . just like Him!* In body, mind, soul and spirit! Total remake . . . complete transformation. Faultless and without blemish . . . all of us, changed entirely, eternally.

Amen