

Jesus is much more than we can imagine

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[0 : 00] Don't you hate it when people put you in a box? When we're living in a world where there's labels flying left, right, and center, you've been more than likely labeled a certain thing.

If you've made a comment on social media, if you put yourself out there, I've yet to win an argument on social media. I've caused a lot of arguments. But sometimes you can cause an argument just by putting a little picture of a kitten on Facebook.

The world has got us thinking in very simplistic either-or categories at the moment, doesn't it? You're either left-wing or right-wing when it comes to politics and social issues.

For example, you're either for gender fluidity or you're transphobic. I read in the news that there's a couple in England whose six-year-old son got a warning letter from the school because he didn't think that boys should be girls and girls should be boys.

If you're white, well, you must be racist. If you're male, you must be oppressive towards women. The thing is, a few of us actually fit so neatly into these little boxes.

[1 : 12] And the reason we don't like to be given a label and to be put in a box in a way is that it makes us smaller than we are. It doesn't allow us to be the people that we can or are, and then it doesn't allow other people to see us for who we are.

That's the whole point about putting people in boxes. You want to put them there and leave them there so you don't have to really deal with them. Oh, you're just a racist. I don't need to listen to you. Meanwhile, you might have some good points that have nothing to do with racism at all.

In our passage today, this is Jesus' problem with the scribes that he comes across. When it comes to the scribes, Jesus says that they've got tunnel vision about the most important person that they know or are hoping for, the Messiah.

They can only focus on one aspect, and they've put the Messiah into a box. And Jesus is saying, no, no, I don't want, we've got to look at that and make it bigger. We can't put the Messiah in that box.

For example, let's just read what they say in verse 35. While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, how is it that the teachers of the law, some say teachers or scribes, I'm going to talk about them as scribes, they're the Jewish leaders, how come the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David?

[2 : 29] David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet, or make your enemies your footstool, some translations.

David himself calls him Lord. How then can he be called his son? So what we see with the scribes is, they've got a certain box they want to put the Messiah in.

They want to put him in the son of David box. For them, that means they're looking all the way back in their history to the time, the greatest leader they had, David, and they're saying, well, if only we could have someone like that.

But to be his son is to imply that David is greater, and the person coming after him isn't, he'll try and reach David's level, but he may not be able to make it. The problem, though, is that the Jews had a certain idea of what the son of David had to do.

For them, he was going to get rid of all the Gentiles, so that the Jews could rule themselves again, and restore the fortunes of the Jewish nation. So it's very focused on them as a people.

[3 : 33] But the problem is that they miss out on the larger story of God. That's why Jesus is constantly in the Gospel of Mark, having clashes with the leaders, with the Jewish leaders. They've kind of forgotten that God wants to include the Gentile nations, not exclude them. God wants to restore the whole of the created order, not just the Jewish nation, for the Jews.

Their vision of the Messiah is too narrow, too one-dimensional, too small. Just defeating human enemies is not going to bring about the kingdom that God wants.

All right, so modern Christians can also fall into similar patterns of sort of blinkered thinking about Jesus and what his mission is. We can also sometimes have too small a picture of Jesus, and we put him into sort of neat theological boxes.

We each come from a theological perspective. If you spend time in a church, you'll hear one thing about, very often very similar things about God, about Jesus. But Jesus doesn't fit into those boxes that neatly.

[4 : 42] Here, in our passage, Jesus is going to push the boundaries. He's going to expand. He's actually going to explode the boundaries of what people expect of the Messiah.

And he does this by quoting Psalm 110, and he wants us to get a vision of the Messiah that goes beyond all expectation. Jesus is so much more than we can imagine.

So what we're going to do is we're going to take a little messianic expansion tour. For those of you who play computer games, you know it's always fun. You get the original game, and then you get the expansion pack, and then you get to explore a whole new world with cool new people and places to go.

Well, Jesus is going to do that. Let's follow Jesus into Psalm 110, as he opens up for us this bigger meaning of what it means to be the Messiah. So you see he quotes Psalm 110.

Turn back there in your Bibles. We'll come back to Mark 12 a bit later. Just so that you know, Psalm 110 is a major, major source of theology in the New Testament. It's the most quoted bit of the Old Testament in the New Testament.

[5 : 48] It's quoted directly or indirectly over 30 times. That's a very important psalm in the story of the Bible. And the first thing we see is that the Messiah is greater than any earthly king.

The main point that the psalm is going to make is that the Messiah is greater than any earthly king. So the first thing we see is that the Messiah is not only the son of David, but he is going to be David's Lord.

You see there, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. Jesus is directly quoting Psalm 110. What's important for us is that in the Hebrew, that first Lord, the Lord, which you may see in capital letters, all capital letters, that's the, the Hebrew behind that is Yahweh, Jehovah, is Yahweh's actual name, the name that he reveals to Moses in the burning bush.

So Yahweh says to my, and the Hebrew behind the second word, it's a capital L, but small O-R-D, is Adonai. So Yahweh says to my Adonai.

Adonai is the Hebrew word for Lord or Master. Many times it refers to God, but anyone else who's in a position of authority can be an Adonai, a Lord.

[7 : 11] Abraham is referred to as an Adonai Lord, you know, and there's people speak to him. Joseph, David himself is referred to in those terms. Now, many see in this reference, that Jesus, a reference to Jesus' divinity, because of the connection with the word Lord.

But Jesus is not actually making that particular point here. Rather, the point is that the Messiah is going to outdo the amazing kingdom that David set up. By being his Lord, he's going to be greater than David, because he's his master.

And in particular, this Lord, is somehow going to end up at God's right hand. But I guess it's a bit like being told that in South Africa, we're going to have a future president that is going to outdo Mandela.

Like if we were promised another president coming in, and say he's going to be greater than Mandela, that would be something to look forward to in our country, wouldn't it? Peace, prosperity, unity, jobs, as long as he fixes the corruption, then that'll be great.

But God is saying that the Messiah, i.e. Jesus, is going to be more than the greatest king that the Jews had ever had. And then it goes on to say something else about him.

[8 : 31] This person, David's Lord, is going to be exalted to the highest possible place of authority in heaven and on earth. He is going to share the throne of the creator God of the universe.

Something David never got to do. Now to sit at God's right hand is to do two of the most important tasks the Messiah can do. And both are present here in the song.

The first that is in focus is that the Messiah is going to be a world ruler who has Yahweh God fighting on his behalf.

You see that? So have a look. Sit at my right hand. So that's Yahweh saying to this David's Lord, come, he's going to say, let's just come sit here by me. Meaning up in heaven.

Verse 2, He's got a fighting force that's ready to go to war for him.

[9 : 46] So all that this king has to do is to have his enemies defeated, is to sit back, relax, and put his feet up.

Because it's the God of the universe who's fighting for him. Imagine God said that about you. Hey, Adrian, just come join me here.

I'm just going to fight all your enemies for you. All righty then. I think we'd see Adrian walking around a little bit differently on a Sunday. If a car crosses him at the stop street.

You know? Well, it should have an effect on us. Because God is fighting for us. Because our enemies have been defeated, which I'll show us in a short while, what Jesus has done for us.

All this Messiah has to do is sit back and relax while God makes mincemeat of all his enemies and then packages them into a nice little stool for his feet to rest on. Remember like, you know, one of the most comfortable positions when you're sitting back on your couch?

[10 : 47] You've probably got those couches that you pull the lever and it's thingy and you can sit there. At my house, I've got some lovely old leather chairs with those footstools that are separate. Oh, it's so comfortable.

Well, this makes the Messiah greater than any other earthly king. Because being at God's right hand assures him of victory on planet Earth.

It doesn't remove him from the affairs of Earth. It makes him more imminent, more active in planet Earth. This Messiah is the Lord under God of heaven and Earth.

And then the second thing, being seated at God's right hand, the second thing that it means for the Messiah is that he will be able to fix the one thing that generations of Old Testament kings could never do.

Not even David and Solomon in all their glory could do this thing that this Messiah, this king is going to do. This king is going to make, he's going to do the priestly work of atoning once for all for the sins of the world.

[11 : 49] Have a look at verse 4. God makes a sworn oath, a sworn promise about this Messiah that's coming. In other words, about Jesus.

The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind. You, speaking to this Messiah, God, speaking to this Messiah, you are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek is a mysterious Old Testament figure. We read about him in Genesis 14. Abraham meets him after he came back from battle. And he's the king of Jerusalem.

Melchizedek, by the way, is Hebrew for king of righteousness. Interesting. King of righteousness. Just pitches up, and Abraham immediately recognizes that this figure is more important than him and gives him a tenth.

Gives him an offering of all the stuff he's won back in this battle. And then this figure blesses him. This king is going to make the ultimate sacrifice to secure eternal salvation for his people, which will make him greater than every other living leader.

[12 : 57] Okay, so there's two things the psalm teaches us about this Messiah. He's going to be, he's greater than David, he's going to sit at God's right hand, he's greater than any kingly, earthly king, and he's going to make atonement for sacrifice.

He's going to be a priest, an eternal priest that makes, that pays eternally for the sins of his people. Going back to how we put our, Jesus in a box, I think the important lesson for us to grasp here is that Jesus, number one, Jesus is this person that the psalmist talking about.

Jesus obviously in Mark 12 is saying, hey, that's going to be me one day, I'm going to be sitting at God's right hand. For us today, Jesus said that 2,000 years ago when he said it in Mark 12, he hadn't yet ascended to God's right hand.

But he has now. He has now. The important thing for us to grasp is that Jesus is right now, currently, sitting at God's right hand and doing the very things that the psalm is talking about.

He is currently in this position now, reigning as Lord of heaven and earth, defeating all his enemies and ensuring that our sins are covered. He's what the theologians call in-session.

[14 : 18] So we need to look at the current session of Christ, or rather, the box that I want us to, I don't want to put Jesus in a box, he's expanding the box, but the box we've got to get, the thing we must expand is, Jesus is currently in session.

Now, this is one of those blank spaces that our theological blinkers sometimes cover. We sometimes don't quite get a narrow focus of Jesus and put him, not in this particular box, but he says, no, this is the box I want you to think of me in.

So let me see, who has heard of Jesus being in session? Have you heard that term before? Not many. Not any. Yeah. Okay. So remember I said we come from certain theological traditions?

Ours doesn't have this, but it is actually part of the Reformed tradition. A very important part. We probably speak about it, we just don't use that term. Being in session is the act of ruling by being seated.

We've got it in our world today, in Parliament. So the opening of Parliament, they all troop in, and then eventually they all sit down, and that's when Parliament starts. That means they're ready to do the business of making laws and getting things done in the world.

[15 : 29] Well, think of a judge when you, I don't know if you've ever been to court, but you all rise, you know, and the judge comes in, and then the business of the court starts as the judge sits.

He's in session. In fact, the word session is Latin for being seated. Sit jone, seated. As you sit down. It sounds strange.

Well, so to be seated means Jesus is in judgment mode. He's dealing out punishment and reward depending on how people respond to the message that he is their Savior and Lord.

You see in Psalm 110 what he does to people who don't listen to him? If you're still in Psalm 110, I'm just going to quote verse 5. The Lord is at your right hand. He will crush kings on the day of his wrath.

He will judge nations heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth. And he's not even going to get tired of that. Verse 7, He will drink from a brook beside the way.

[16 : 34] Therefore, he will lift up his head. He's going to keep going until they're all dead. And he's going to keep going because it's hard work wielding a scepter like that. So I know it sounds scary, Jesus being in this kind of position, but it's only scary if you don't belong to him.

If you do belong to him, the New Testament connects amazing blessings with Christ being in heaven for his people because he's defeating our enemies.

So I want to look at two New Testament passages that help us see what amazing benefits we get because Jesus is currently ruling from heaven. Would that be helpful? I think it would be nice to see.

So you may need to, you may want to turn to Ephesians. I'll have it on the screen. So Ephesians chapter 1, Paul is talking to the church at Ephesus and he's reminding them of the amazing privilege they've got of being a Christian.

Bearing in mind that the church in Ephesus was a predominantly Gentile church. They didn't really know that they'd get this Messiah as their Lord. So what does it mean for them?

[17 : 49] He says this, he says, essentially he says, you get the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is going to be at work in you. So he says this, that power is the same, the power that's working in you Christians in Ephesus is the same as the mighty strength that God exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms far above all rule, all authority, all power, and all dominion.

the same power that rose Jesus from the dead and then took him up to heaven is at work in the Christian church. And every rule and authority, every evil thing in our way is under the rule of Christ.

God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything and the purpose for the sake of the church.

that's us. He had little St. Mark's 2,000 years after Paul wrote this letter. That's for us. Not just for Adrian. That's for all of us.

Head over everything for the church which is body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Now this teaches us that the whole world is under the authority of Christ, including the church, which we should know about, but the thing that points out here is that as the church, we're also his body, which means we get to partner with him in the renewal of all things, in having authority over the evil things in this world.

[19 : 33] We are the means through which the ruler of the universe, King Jesus, has an effect on planet Earth. He effectively rules through us on planet Earth.

So it's both a privilege and a huge responsibility. So that's one thing, one of the things that the New Testament connects with Jesus being in heaven.

There's huge amounts of other things. I'm just highlighting one or two for us. We'll explore more of these in our growth groups next week. Then the second thing Jesus, being seated at God's right hand, assures me is that my sins have once for all been paid for and I don't have to be bogged down by my past or my present mistakes.

This is a lovely, lovely teaching. But again, it's connected to Christ being at God's right hand. The fact that he's in a position to mediate that atoning sacrifice to his people.

So Hebrews chapter 10 teaches us about this. In fact, if you want to go through Hebrews chapter 1 through to 10, it's all about Christ being exalted above every other person and about his sacrifice that he's able to give to people.

[20 : 47] But Hebrews 10 summarizes it nicely. It says this, Day after day, every priest stands and performs his religious duties. Again and again, he offers the same sacrifices which can never take away sins.

Talking about the Old Testament sacrificial system. But, when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, meaning Jesus, he sat down at the right hand of God, indicating that it's been finished.

And since that time, he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice, he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Again, that's us. Christ's session in heaven at God's right hand assures us in ways that nothing else can, that his sacrifice was truly accepted by God and that our sins have truly, completely, and totally been done away with and that it'll last forever.

It won't, his sacrifice is not going to wear off or wear down. His validity and the efficacy, the validity and the working of Christ's blood is going to continue through our whole lives in this life and through all eternity.

[22 : 04] Just to sum up this whole thing about the session of Christ, about Christ ruling over the world, from a theologian that we look at at college, a guy called Louis Burkhoff who comes from that reformed tradition, he says this about the session of Christ.

He says, Christ is now publicly inaugurated when Jesus goes up into heaven, he's publicly inaugurated as the God-man and as such receives the government of the church and of heaven and of earth and enters solemnly upon the actual administration of the power committed to him.

Isn't that amazing? That's where Christ is, that's our king if we belong to him and all the benefits that he can do for us by defeating every evil in the world that we face, fighting for us, that's ours to have in Christ because he's currently doing that from heaven.

So hopefully we've gone a little expansion to it, we've expanded our vision of Jesus, he's this mighty king who's ruling from heaven on our behalf. But now we come down to earth and ask one or two questions about how we're supposed to live.

So we're going to go back to Mark 12 and just end our time there. So having this kind of vision of Jesus, putting him in a much bigger box, should help us with two things that Jesus points out in the next part of the passage.

[23 : 35] You see, he talks about himself as the son of God and as the Lord, sorry, who's sitting at God's right hand. And then he goes on to say, watch out, verse 38, back in Mark 12, verse 38, watch out for the teachers of the law.

So there's a warning. There's one thing that he doesn't like and it's what the scribes are doing. And then from verse 41, he talks about the poor widow and he says, no, I want you to do things like that.

I don't like what the scribes are doing, but I want you to live like what this poor widow is doing. And so the two things we're going to end up looking, end our time looking up is we need to avoid sort of showy hypocrisy and we need to give genuinely as God's people.

We need to avoid showy hypocrisy and we need to give genuinely. When Jesus looks at the scribes, he doesn't just see their outward show, but he looks inward to their inner motivations.

He sees how they dress to impress, how they say long, elaborate prayers, pretending to be religious, deeply concerned about their image, desperate to be seen as having power, as a craving influence, being recognized in the marketplace, first seat here and there, place of honor.

[24 : 53] But in reality, they're cold-hearted, calculating and cruel. Verse 40, they devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers.

So they're picking on the weakest, most vulnerable in society, all the while pretending to be holy which makes him nothing but spiritual bullies. The warning for us, we need to be on our guard against this kind of person, both in the world and in the church, probably especially in the church because that's who Jesus is judging here, the religious leaders.

Now you'd think we'd see this kind of person a mile off, but sadly, these are the kind of people who sometimes have the most power and influence in the church and then are followed and loved and adored.

Now we don't have them in our church that I know of. I don't mean just St. Mark's, I mean Reach, South Africa, we're pretty good at weeding those kinds of people out. But they're all over the place, aren't they?

Just witness the kind of celebrity pastors that are loved by many American churches and then followed and copied by many African churches. So let's put up a picture of some of the pastors that I'm kind of thinking of.

[26 : 02] Okay, do we know who they are? Yeah, who's the lady? Some of us know. Joyce Myers. Okay, and another guy? One or two T.D. Jakes, depends if you've got DSTV maybe, but he pops up regularly.

I just want to ask to look at how much their net worth is. Okay, so this is their own personal wealth. This is how much they personally own, not their NGOs that are named after them. You know, it's Joyce Myers Ministries and T.D. Jakes Ministries.

That's also another thing. Just be careful of people who name ministries after themselves. Anyway, Joyce Myers is worth \$151 million in her own personal capacity. T.D. Jakes has got \$300 million to his name.

That's not their businesses. That's what they have lying around in their bank account. Okay, and then the next two. So, who have we got there?

You've got Joel Osteen on the right, or one side, and then on the other side you've got Kenneth Copeland. Kenneth Copeland is the one that started all this health, wealth, and prosperity stuff. Basically, using everything as a smoke screen to make as much money as he can, and he's done very well, because they both have.

[27 : 15] Joel Osteen is, let's have a look at their numbers. So, Joel Osteen is worth one and a half billion rand, and Kenneth Copeland is worth 11 billion.

And they prey on people who are desperate for something, anything, to get their loved one healed. So, what is Jesus going to say has happened to this type of false leader?

Well, Jesus got a stark warning. Such men, verse 40 he says, will be punished most severely. Most severely.

So, we must avoid this kind of showy hypocrisy but, we must also then give genuinely. And I think that's the best way to combat sort of having a show but not really having the reality is to give out to the genuineness of our hearts.

We've got to be more like the poor widow who gives genuinely. Now, looking at this poor widow from worldly standards, we're tempted to think, yes, what a pitiful gift. She gives just a couple of cents.

[28 : 27] It isn't worth anything. What have you been bothering to put that in the coffers for? But Jesus overturns that way of thinking completely. In his kingdom, it's the poor who give sacrificially, who are valued more than the wealthy who give but still hold something back for God.

It's the relative size of the gift that counts. It may seem so small and ineffective in our eyes, but in the eyes of Jesus, it's a magnificent gift. To learn from this, I think Jesus takes seriously what people contribute to his kingdom, no matter how small.

Often people who don't have a lot of money will tell themselves that they can't give anything worthwhile. But Jesus says you can. Don't overlook how important your contributions to the work of Christ are.

Now, the thing is, if we don't give to his cause, we miss out on an opportunity to win appreciation from Jesus. He commends this poor widow. He says, yeah, that's what I want you guys to be like. She's amazing. We also miss out on a chance for others to give thanks to God on our behalf for whatever we've done for them.

I just want to look at another New Testament passage. It'll come up on the screen now. Paul, writing to the Corinthian church, encourages them to think in this kind of way, to have this kind of big vision of Jesus and then to have that change the way how we think of giving to his cause.

[29 : 52] Paul says this, remember this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Just a note, he's making an appeal to the church in Corinth, again, and also quite a small church, and they were collecting money, also a very poor church, they were collecting money to give to the Jews in Jerusalem because there was a famine in the land.

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

And he says you will be enriched in every way, talking about people who give, so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God, through us because the apostles are taking their money to Jerusalem.

But notice what their giving results in, thanksgiving to God. So with Jesus in charge of the world, it's not really business as usual on planet earth.

Those who think they are important, and who pretend to be holy, and who hold out on God, are going to be dismissed. Those who are low, and neglected, and overlooked, and poor, but generous, will be raised up, recognized, and rewarded.

[31 : 19] In closing then, now that we've expanded our vision of Jesus, let's not put him back into small little theological boxes. Don't try and put Jesus into a box.

Don't keep him in the Jesus is my personal savior, he's died so I can have a personal relationship with God box. He's much bigger than just our own little thing.

Jesus is bigger, way bigger than that. Yes, it should start with Jesus saving us, and bringing us into his kingdom, but it mustn't end there. He is the exalted Lord of heaven and earth.

Earlier we talked about South Africa getting a leader that can outdo Mandela. In truth, we already have one, and he's sitting at God's right hand right now. It's only a South Africa recognize its true leader that will again get an earthly representative, hopefully, that will bring about the blessings of the kingdom of God in our country.

But more than that, we can become the kind of leaders that God wants us to be if we base our lives on the kind of leader that Jesus is. Knowing that Christ is already ruling and already defeated all our enemies should help motivate us to pray hard and to work night and day to make the rule of Christ a reality in our lives, in our families, in our business, in our community, and in our land.

[32 : 41] Let's pray for Jesus to do that for us. Lord Jesus, lovely reminder of how exalted you are to the highest place in heaven and earth.

Lord, that's so humbling because who are we that you've chosen us to be your people? And who are we that you've poured out all these beautiful blessings of protection, security, and power, and blessing and forgiveness of sins?

Lord, help us to be so thankful for that and to remember who you are and to live that out in our lives so we can extend your kingdom on earth to your glory and honor.

Amen.