

Knowing the Truth Is Not Living by Faith

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 9. We are going to continue to work our way through Luke. We're getting into some *really* good stuff. As a matter of fact, Luke just gets better and better as you work through [it]. As we shall see, [it] contains some of the strongest and most definitive calls to discipleship in the entire Bible.

Most of us have had vaccines of one kind or another for things like polio, small pox, and things like that—the yearly flu or whatever. Vaccines are interesting because when you receive a vaccine you're actually receiving what you don't want to receive. The difference is that when the vaccine is prepared, the microorganisms that cause whatever disease or sickness it is are killed and/or weakened, or some of the parts of them are extracted or synthetically reproduced so that when you get an injection and [the vaccine] enters into your system, your body creates what is called “antigens.” The antigens then create kind of a barrier, [and] your body remembers that [the microorganisms in the vaccine] are bad guys. So when the real deal comes along, then [the antigens] are all ready to fight [it] off and you don't get sick. It's an incredible thing when you think about that happening over millions and billions of years by chance. It almost sounds like there was a Creator—a very smart Creator—who organized everything.

[The result from a receiving a vaccination] is very similar to something that happens in the lives of church-going people. Sometimes people [go] to

church, and maybe the church doesn't teach strongly, [provides only] light teaching, [and] maybe [only] small doses of [the] Bible. Maybe you grew up in the church, and from a very early age you [went] through Sunday school, the youth program—you [got] a lot of exposure to church, but you really [didn't] hear the truth clearly, you [weren't] confronted with the truth, and over a long period of time, you just [had] these feeble doses given to you. You never [had] the gospel really preached to you strongly, you were never exposed to the enormity of your sin and offense to a holy God, you were never threatened with hell, never told specifically about how to receive the free gift of eternal life. Because of this, you've become inoculated to the truth—vaccinated. Maybe your mind built up spiritual antigens to God's Word in the form of excuses, deceptions, [and] rationalizations. When the truth finally arrives in full strength and power, your mind is ready to ward it off because you've been able to deal with smaller doses before.

People like this sit in churches every week, hearing the truth but never responding to it. Hell will be filled with people who were churchgoers. If you want to do something to make me cringe, talk about getting people "churched." People don't need [to be] "churched," they need [to be] saved through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Many people are "churched." Getting them into the building doesn't get them saved. The Word of God may cause in some inoculated churchgoers a little bit of guilt, it may convict them some, [even] make them feel uncomfortable, but they're able to leave and shake it off because of the antigens of unbelief and deception. Then they're able to just continue to live a life contrary to God's will and it doesn't really bother them at all.

There's a danger—even in the lives of believers—of becoming inoculated to certain truths. Let me just give you an example. You know that the New Testament says we are to obey the governing authorities. Some of you right now, just [with my] saying that, [are] going, "Oh, no! He's going to talk about..." Your conscience is already saying, "Warning!" [Let's say] you're driving down the road, [and] there's a speed limit. If you don't know what that means, that's the *maximum* speed—the limit—to which the law

allows you to drive. You look down; you're driving faster than that. Then you say, "Well, everybody's doing it. I'm a safe driver! The road conditions are good. Besides, the laws are more like guidelines." Since we are sinners, we make excuses for why it's OK to break the law. We're good at it. We're lawbreakers.

The other day, I was riding my bike. I went up the street and then went up another long hill. When I finally got to the top—it was about 97 degrees outside—I thought, "This was dumb. This was a dumb time to go riding a bike." So I finally get to the top of the hill and I start coasting down the other side and there's this long, smooth grade downhill and it felt *so good*. I started picking up speed [and] pretty soon I just couldn't go any faster. I was just blasting down the hill. About halfway down the hill there was a stop sign. Even before I got there, I thought, "You know, I'm on a bike. I'm not like a car or anything. Besides, I can hear really [well]. I mean, I can hear if a car was coming and I'll look both ways before I get to the intersection." And I blew through [the stop sign].

Then all of a sudden, "Jack! Jack!" my conscience started talking to me. "Jack! What are you doing? You just ran the stop sign. Would you do that if your kids were here? *God's* here!" And I just said, "Get out of my mind!" All those Bible verses—they torment you. It was at that point that I had an option. I had an option either to listen to my conscience, which is informed by the Word of God, and give God the glory by stopping at the next stop sign—and there was one—or to ignore my conscience and in doing so, sin upon sin, harden my heart, and do what was pleasurable and easiest for me. And you know what? If I ran enough stop signs, I could probably do it and not be bothered at all. I could sear my conscience and it wouldn't even bother me.

Now, there might be one or two other examples you might think about in your life. I will let the Holy Spirit take time to work you over from here. But as we approach the text of Luke this morning, I want to focus on this: Knowing the truth is not living by faith. I have preached on this plenty [and] I will do it more because it appears over and over in the Bible. People

deceive themselves into thinking that they are Christians, and [that] they are pleasing the Lord, and [that they are] walking with the Lord because they come to a building where the church meets and [they] call themselves Christians. That is *not* living by faith!

[In] Luke 9, starting in verse 18 [and going] all the way through verse 55, Luke very strategically picks a whole bunch of situations that describe private conversations Jesus had with His disciples. The more you study Luke and you get into the details, [the more] you realize how masterful and how precise Luke is. He has an agenda; he has a reason for everything. If you could just figure it out. Sometimes he has multiple reasons and they're stacked up. It's really quite brilliant.

In this section, Luke is working on some private conversations that Jesus has with His disciples. According to Mark 8:27, Jesus is ministering in the villages near Caesarea Philippi, which is north [and] slightly east of the Sea of Galilee. Philippi is [an] interesting little area. It's quite lush and green, with lots of streams. It's a beautiful place. So [Jesus] is around there somewhere. Remember that in Luke 9, [at] the beginning of the chapter, Jesus sends out the Twelve and He sends them out because He wants them to start practicing what they've been learning. He's been teaching them, modeling the truth before them, and now He sends them out with "power and authority" to preach the kingdom, to heal all manner of disease and sickness, and to cast out demons [see Luke 9:1–2]. So they go out by twos and start doing what Jesus asked them to do.

Then, [seemingly] out of nowhere, Luke inserts this small comment in verses 7–9. If you look at Luke 9:7–9, notice what it says there:

Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. Herod said, "I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man

about whom I hear such things?” And he kept trying to see Him.

What apparently happened is that when Jesus sent the Twelve out, John the Baptist was still alive. When He sent them out, they were probably out for a month, two, three, four—we don’t know—going about to all the villages doing what Jesus told them to do. It was during that time that John was arrested and then had his head cut off. Now, Luke takes what at first glance seems to be a rather random, out-of-sequence comment, and he inserts it for a couple of reasons. The first reason, [which] we talked about [in a previous sermon, was] to let us know that the disciples were being sent out into dangerous territory. In fact, John the Baptist loses his head over it. [The second reason] Luke includes this little section about Herod [is] because of Herod’s question: “Who is this man about whom I hear such things?”

This question then drives the private discussion Jesus has with His disciples and the episodes that follow. First, we see that Luke begins to answer the question “Who is this man?” by telling us about the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus, of course, feeds the 5,000, [miraculously multiplying] the fish and the loaves [for] a huge crowd, which pretty much [relegates] Him to one category: God. [Because] He is able to do this incredible thing, He is either God or He’s wielding the power of God. That’s it. That is the first attempt, or first stage, in Luke answering the question: “Who is this man?”

Now we come to our text in Luke 9:18–22, where Jesus works this even more. Follow along as I read, starting in verse 18:

And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, “Who do the people say that I am?” They answered and said, “John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again.” And He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered and said, “The Christ of

God.” But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, saying, ”The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.”

Now, from this portion of Luke’s Gospel, I want you to consider three very important questions about Jesus’ identity, and then we’re going to look at the proper response in light of the correct answers. The first question is this: Who is Jesus according to the world? Look at verse 18: “And it happened that while He was praying alone.” Stop there for a moment. We have seen this many times before and we have learned that Jesus was a man of prayer. Jesus was constantly praying, asking the Father for help. We have also pointed out, and it is interesting to note, that the greater the circumstances, the greater the decision, the greater the trial facing Jesus, the harder He prays. That’s what we see Him doing here. He is praying. Of course, this teaches us that all of us need to pray, too.

Look at the middle of [Luke 9:]18, where we read: “The disciples were with Him.” Just stop there. We’ve already looked at this quite a bit, too. We’ve talked about what discipleship [is]. Discipleship isn’t [just] you getting together with me and me teaching you something. That’s part of it, but it involves [both] instruction *and* modeling. It involves not only knowing the truth, but [also] living the truth. When you disciple somebody, you want to instruct them, yes, but you also want to model whatever you’re teaching them. This is what we see Jesus doing—this is what discipleship is all about. We’ve beat that into the dust.

Look at the end of [Luke 9:]18: “And He questioned them, saying, ”Who do the people say that I am?” This is the first of three questions that the text prompts us to ask and answer. Each answer to each successive question becomes more significant than the previous. This is the first and least significant, “Who do the people,” the masses, the general populace of the Jews, “say that I am?” Who do they believe Jesus is? Well, look at verse 19. The disciples begin to answer: “They answered and said, ‘John

the Baptist.” Why would some [people] think Jesus was John the Baptist? Well, both Jesus and John the Baptist preached repentance. Both Jesus and John the Baptist didn’t fear men. Both Jesus and John the Baptist stood up to and condemned the religious establishment. Both Jesus and John the Baptist attracted masses of people. And, the followers of both Jesus and John the Baptist were baptized. So, you can see why they thought that He might be John the Baptist risen from the dead.

Look again at verse 19 and notice [that] the other popular guess was that He was Elijah. Now, why would they think this? Well, one: Elijah never died. If you remember, he was taken up to heaven—there was the fiery chariot and all that business [see 2 Kings 2:11]. He never died. He and Enoch [see Hebrews 11:5] were the two people in the Bible who never died. [Also, in] Malachi 4:5, God predicts the second coming of Elijah, that “before the great and terrible day of the LORD,” God would send back Elijah to restore Israel so that it would not be struck with a curse. Not only that, Jesus was obviously a prophet like Elijah, [and] Elijah preached fearlessly and Jesus preached fearlessly. [Also], Elijah performed miracles and Jesus performed miracles. Elijah was a really good guess. The problem is [that] it was a wrong guess. [Jesus] wasn’t Elijah.

Finally, look at the end of [Luke 9:]19: “But others,” were saying “that one of the prophets of old has risen again.” Now, why would they say this? Well, because of what we just talked about. Jesus wasn’t your average cult leader, getting a group of people [together and] trying to get fame and power for Himself. He was a formidable person—a teacher like no one had ever seen teach before, a miracle worker [who performed miracles] like no one had ever seen before. He was obviously a prophet. He was obviously of God, like Nicodemus said when he came to Him at night: “We know that you are from God because no one can do the things that you do unless God is with him” [see John 3:2]. It’s a no brainer.

Jesus didn’t quote anybody else when He taught, He didn’t ever have a footnote. He just said, “This is it. This is the truth,” with unflinching conviction, just like the prophets of old who called people to turn from

their sin and turn to God. Jesus was a prophet, but they were not sure if He was *the* prophet—the one prophesied in Deuteronomy 18[:15] that God would send—or if He was some Old Testament figure resurrected to beat on them some more, or if He was a new prophet.

Now, to bring this text home, we might ask, “What about the people of Burbank? Who do they say Jesus is?” Jesus asked the disciples and we got the answer for the people [of their time], but who do the people of Burbank—the people that you work with, your neighbors, your friends—who do they say Jesus is? Very few [people] believe in the right answer today. Some people don’t even believe that Jesus existed, that He’s even a historical person, which is amazing. [It’s] a very ostrich-like technique: “I don’t want to deal with it,” so “plunk,” [they stick their heads] into the hole. It’s like saying George Washington didn’t exist. “Well, I never saw him. He didn’t exist.”

Others believe [that Jesus] was a great man and a great moral teacher, but nothing more. He wasn’t God. Still others believe He was god, but with a little “g,” which really means He wasn’t God at all because there’s only one God and He’s got a big “G” in front of His name. For most [people] out there, Jesus was a man who lived a long time ago, had a group of followers, and over the years myths have arisen [about Him] to make people think He was born of a virgin. But we all know it’s not true. That He was the Son of God, but we all know that’s not true either. And He died on the cross for the sins of men. Yes, He was crucified, but there was no atonement thing there. He definitely did not rise from the dead. That’s what most people believe about Jesus. After all, we live in a modern society—everybody knows that people don’t rise from the dead, that virgins don’t give birth to children, that God maybe doesn’t even exist, that we’re just a product of random chance and material that appeared out of nowhere and intelligently stuck itself together [over millions of years].

So, instead of turning from sin and yielding to the sovereign will of Jesus Christ, what happens is [that] men want to sin, and they want to sin with a conscience that isn’t nagging at them, because it really ruins your

sin if while you're sinning your conscience is saying, "Beep. Beep. Beep. Warning! Stop! Stop!"—it just ruins the whole thing. Then, you take the reason for having a guilty conscience and you just deny it and sear your conscience so you can sin freely without being bothered.

C.S. Lewis stated it this way in his classic work *Mere Christianity*:

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 a man who says he is a poached egg—or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a mad-man or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool 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.

Josh McDowell distilled Lewis' reasoning down into this: "Jesus is either Lord, liar, or lunatic." You see, if Jesus is who He claimed to be, He is the Lord God. If Jesus is *not* who He claimed to be, then He's a liar because He's not the Lord God and He said He was. Since His claims are so outrageous, if indeed not true, then He would surely have to be a lunatic. While most people do not come to such sharpness in their reasoning and logic about Jesus, it still remains: If you're going to say Jesus is Lord, if He's God, then you better live it. *You better live it.* The logic is inescapable, and shows the absurdity of saying Jesus was a great moral teacher while at the same time He's a liar and a lunatic. That just doesn't work. Either admit that you don't believe Jesus is the Son of God, but the devil from hell, or bow at His feet in humble repentance and submit to His will for your life, but don't try and play the fence. There is no fence! There's the high ground and hell. If you admit He is who He says He is, He is the Judge as well as the Savior. He will cast all those who do not submit to Him into hell. He said it. Knowing the truth about Jesus, again, is *not living by faith*.

This brings us to our next question, [the answer to which] is even more important than the first: Who is Jesus according *to you*? Look at [Luke 9:]20: “And He said to them,” the disciples, “But who do you say that I am?” Jesus now has left the masses: “Don’t tell me about the populace, I don’t want to know what the popular opinions are. I want to know what *you* think about me.” He uses the emphatic “you” here. What that means is [that] He is saying: “[Who] do you yourselves individually say I am? Who am I to you personally?” The only person who answers is Peter, who tended to speak up for the others even when they didn’t ask him to. We have no way of knowing if Peter is speaking for the Twelve, or if he’s speaking just for himself, or if the Holy Spirit has come upon him and he’s giving a divine revelation from God. We aren’t told. We’ll get to [that] in a minute.

Don’t miss this: The question of Jesus’ identity is the most important question anybody could ever ask and get the answer to. It is *the* question and its answer is the hinge upon which your eternity swings. It has to be answered correctly or you will suffer eternal torment in hell forever. Luke is working hard to show us who Jesus is. Yes, He’s a real person. Yes, He’s fully human. Yes, He is divine, fully God. It is proved by what He said, it is proved by what He did, and Herod asked the right question: “Who is this man?”

Beloved of God, you need to have the right answer to this question. You’ve got to have it right. Not “who is Jesus according to the masses? Who is Jesus according to your parents or according to me or according to the general consensus of Christians or the media,” but who is Jesus according to you yourself? Finish this sentence: I, _____, put your name in the blank, believe Jesus is. . . . What? Who?

You may be thinking to yourself, “Well, Jack, there’s a lot to say about Jesus. I mean, John even says that all the books in the world could not contain all of the things about Him [see John 21:25].” I’m not asking you about all the books in the world; I’m asking you about *your* book. What does your book say about Jesus? What does your mental file say about Jesus? When you look under the dictionary line in your brain [labeled]

“Jesus,” what comes after that? Jesus, in His high-priestly prayer in John 17:3, says, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” If you’re going to get to heaven, if you have the free gift of eternal life, you have to know Jesus. That is what eternal life is: knowing Jesus.

In the early church, many false teachers arose who promoted all sorts of false views about Jesus just after the apostles died, or even just before that. If you read Paul’s letters there are just constant problems with false teachers [and] in Jude and Peter [as well]. Well, [the false teachers] really came on strong after the apostles were gone. And so, the Church said, “You know, we need to do something about this. Let’s all get together and make a distilled, concentrated statement—a creed, a saying—that we know is true from the Scriptures. Then when people come in—other teachers and people we don’t know—we’ll run them through the grid of the creed. If they don’t believe [it], then we’ll keep them out.” So what is the most important thing? One of the [earliest] of these creeds is the Apostles’ Creed. It was written late in the first century or early in the second century. It could have been written during the time John was still alive on the island of Patmos in the [AD] 90s. Rich Mullins wrote a song based on it. The creed, speaking of Christ, says this:

I believe...in Jesus Christ [God the Father’s] only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

That’s a great one. That works. Is that your definition? Is that what’s in your mental file about Jesus?

Later, in AD 325, there was a need to be a little bit more definitive, and so scholars got together and wrote what is called the Nicene Creed. After some minor revisions in AD 381, the Nicene Creed says this of Jesus:

I believe. . . in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man: And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried: And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures: And ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father: And he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead: Whose Kingdom will have no end.

That's even a little better [than the Apostles' Creed]. You [read] statements like this, and you think, "Well, that must have fixed it." No, [it didn't], because after that, after the Nicene Creed was out, there was still a lot of wrangling about this big issue: the dual natures and single personhood of Jesus. What I mean by "dual natures" is that Jesus was 100 percent God and 100 percent man and yet one person. The big term, if you want to wow somebody with this—you can write it down in your Bible just to thump them—is the "hypostatic union." Doesn't that sound tough? That is a cool term. "Yeah, we're studying the hypostatic union." That is a good two-cent term. In AD 451, scholars assembled at the council of Chalcedon and wrote a more definitive and lasting definition defending Jesus' full humanity and full deity in single personhood. The word "substance" or "subsistence" [used in this creed] is translated from the word "hypostasis," which is the word they get "hypostatic" from, [which means] "bringing two things into one." This is what they wrote:

Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body: of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, Recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two person, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.

That is good. You can hardly get more definitive than that. They're hitting it from every angle you could think of. And, believe me, when a whole bunch of scholars get together and wrangle over something for years, that's about as concise as you can get it. That baby is packed with truth. The question is: Is *that* what you believe about Jesus? Now, you may be out there thinking, "Well, I don't have the 'Jack Hughes Creed,' or whatever. I don't have my own personal creed, [but] I believe things about Jesus." Martha, the sister of Lazarus had it right when she confessed to Jesus in John 11:27: "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world." I believe "You are the Christ." I believe You are "the Son of God." I believe You came "into the world."

I know most of you probably don't have some creed all written out for yourself. Some of you may have memorized one of these other creeds. In some churches they read them almost every week—some churches pretty much every week. Everything you know about Jesus and believe about Jesus is your creed. The question is: What's in your creed? If your own creed doesn't state that Jesus is fully God and fully man, that He is born of a virgin, that He lived a perfect life of righteousness, and was crucified for sinners, buried and resurrected on the third day, that He's sitting at the right hand of the throne of God and coming again to judge the living and the dead, you need to fix your creed because that is the truth. That truth matters with how you live your life.

Now, if you need a very concise definition, we'll find it in our next [question]: Who is Jesus according to God? You know, men have different opinions, but God's opinion matters most. The correct answer is always given by God because God is never wrong. Look at the middle of [Luke 9:]20: "And Peter answered and said, 'The Christ of God.'" That's pretty concise—"the Christ of God." Matthew gives us a more complete version of Peter's answer in Matthew 16:16, which is the parallel text [to the passage in Luke 9]. Peter responded: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Another important statement that Matthew includes, which Mark and Luke leave out, but which is important to understanding our text, is what Jesus said right after Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is what Jesus said right after that—in Matthew 16:17, Jesus replies, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona," "Barjona" being "son of Jonah," "because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." What does this tell us? It tells us [that] Peter received the right answer by divine revelation. This is why it's difficult to discern whether or not Peter was speaking for the Twelve, speaking for himself, or [if] at that moment the Holy Spirit came upon him and he uttered [the answer] by divine revelation. Regardless, he had the right answer because it was God's answer. Peter spoke on behalf of God, having received God's revelation.

Now, what's very interesting [is], if you read John's Gospel, John makes it very clear—especially early on in Jesus' ministry—that the disciples believed Jesus was the Messiah and believed He was the Son of God. So what's going on here? Why now, later in Jesus' ministry, is Jesus trying to get them to admit, or come to understand, who He is if they already did? Well, this is why. Do you remember what happened with John the Baptist? Do you remember when he was in prison [and] how he sent his disciples to Jesus and they asked him, "Are you the Expected One?" [see Matthew 11:3; Luke 7:19–20]. Do you remember that discussion? Most of you were probably here. Well, what's the deal? John was the forerunner. John baptized Jesus. John knew [Jesus] was the Lamb of God. John heard the voice out of heaven: "This is My Son. Listen to Him" [see Matthew 3:16–17]. [Why did he] have [his] disciples [go] and say, "Are you the Expected One?" No duh. It seems very clear, doesn't it? To us it seems like, "Well, why did they have to do that again? What was wrong? Was John confused? Was he being starved? Was he delirious?" No.

This was it: The Jews knew the Old Testament Scriptures. They knew that when the Messiah came, He would overthrow Gentile powers and exalt the nation of Israel. And so, early on, when Jesus came on the scene and was doing all these [miraculous] things, they thought, "This is the Messiah, man. This guy, He's got some big guns. I mean, this guy, He's the one we've been waiting for. He's going to take out Rome, He's going to establish His kingdom, He's going to exalt us as a nation." Then what happened? It didn't happen. As a matter of fact, Jesus started doing less [and] the disciples started doing more. No army was raised. Rome was not overthrown. And now the disciples are thinking, "Hmm. You know, we've seen the miracles and stuff," [but] they just didn't understand. It was commonly believed among the Jews that the Messiah would be a great military leader and that He would overthrow Rome, and [Jesus] didn't [do that].

But Luke has succeeded in answering the all-important question, which Herod first asks earlier in the text: "Who is this man?" Luke has answered it by saying, "Well, He's somebody who can feed 5-, 10-, 15,000 people

by multiplying bread out of nothing. He's not who the masses think He is. Peter had it right because he got his answer from God and God is always right. [Jesus] is "Christ, the Son of the Living God." That is the right answer.

This leads us to our [final] point. So, Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Knowing who Jesus is should cause you to live by faith. You would think that since Jesus asked [the disciples] specifically, "Who do they say I am? Who do you say I am?" [and] the divine answer [has been given] that Jesus would say, "All right, guys. Let's get out there and tell them who I am. The Messiah is here [see Matthew 1:6]. The King of kings is here [see 1 Timothy 6:15]. The Redeemer is here. The righteous branch of David [is here] [see Jeremiah 33:15]. The King of kings is going to rule on David's throne and exalt Israel. Get out there and tell them who I am!" But what does He say? Look at [Luke 9:]21: "But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone." Ahh! Think about that in light of the statements where Jesus says, "If you deny me before men I will deny you before the Father" [see Luke 9:26; Matthew 10:33]. We're going to see this next week.

You're thinking, "What's going on here? Why this definitive definition of who Jesus is, followed by, 'Now, don't tell anyone.'?" What's interesting is [that] the New American Standard translated [this verse]: "He warned them and instructed" but the New King James version says, "He strictly warned and commanded" and the English Standard version translates it: "He strictly charged and commanded." This is serious. After Jesus says, "Peter, flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but My Father who is in heaven. You have the right answer. I am the Christ, the Son of the Living God," he said, "and don't you *dare* tell anybody." That seems very strange. Why not [tell people]?

Well, because of [Luke 9:]22. Look there. Jesus was undergoing what is called His "humiliation." He knew He still had to die for the sins of men before He could be exalted and received as the King. So, Jesus says, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day." This

is the first of three instances where Luke predicts Jesus' death. [The] other instances [are] in Luke 9:44, and then later on in Luke 18:31–33. But the reason why Jesus didn't want His followers going around saying, "Jesus is the Messiah! Jesus is the Messiah!" is because Jesus needed to die and pay the penalty for sin so He could be the Savior. He needed to fulfill all those Old Testament prophecies. He needed to be buried and rise again from the dead, conquering death so that He could take with Him all those who would die thereafter. He was the first fruit of the resurrection. It *had* to happen. God had to allow Him to be killed so that He could then be resurrected. He would not allow His holy one to undergo decay [see Acts 2:27, 13:35, 37].

The Jews should have figured this out, but they just didn't see it. When they looked at the Old Testament Scriptures, they saw the Messiah coming, suffering *but not dying*, overthrowing Rome, and setting up a kingdom. They didn't see the first and second comings—that was foreign to their thinking. But the logic would have told the Jews that this had to happen. Listen to what the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 10:1–4. The author of Hebrews, speaking about this, says:

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

If you read Hebrews 8–10, you will see this fundamental argument that you cannot atone for the sins of a man with the [blood] of an animal. You have to have a perfect human who is willing to lay down his life for an imperfect human, and I'm telling you, they're hard to come by. That is why

God, in the fullness of time, sent forth His Son, born of a virgin, born under the Law, so that He could live a perfect life so He could willingly die and offer Himself up a sacrifice for the sins of unworthy sinners. Here we are. That is why Jesus said, “Don’t tell anybody.” It’s “don’t tell anybody *until* I do what I’ve come to do—I fulfill the prophecies and fulfill My final goal in coming, which is to die for the sins of men. Then after that, you have to tell men, and if you don’t, I will deny you before the Father.”

The greatest question you can ask and answer is: Who is Jesus? The answer is: Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” We all need to understand this, and not only that, we all need to live by it. You know the truth, you know who Jesus is, you know what He did, you know He’s the Savior, so what? Well, the so what is: so live your life in light of that truth. If you need a modern-day example, look in the mirror. Do you ever know what is right to do and not do it? Sure. There’s a name for that. James says [that] whoever “knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is” what? “sin” [James 4:17]. You bet.

There are two kinds of people who sin: believers and unbelievers, which pretty much covers it, doesn’t it? Unbelievers do nothing but sin, and [believers], who know the truth, have a choice to either sin or not sin, but they sin regularly anyway. It’s just that they receive forgiveness, confess their sin, and turn back to follow the Lord. But do not be deceived: knowledge is not a synonym for obedience. You need to have knowledge so you can obey, but knowledge by itself is not obeying.

For a church like Calvary Bible Church, this is an ever-present danger, because I’m telling you, we’re into giving truth out, here. [If] you attend here, you are getting pounded with the Word. You can’t escape it. The children get it, the youth get it, the adults get it. You get it at every event, every retreat, [in] every “Calvary Review,” every sermon, every Sunday school class, every discipleship group, [and at] every music event. You cannot escape. We will not let you. Anyone who chooses to get involved in this local body will grow fat with knowledge of the Bible. It is inescapable. But growing fat with Bible knowledge doesn’t mean you are walking by faith.

It merely means you're more accountable to God because of what you've been given.

Turn over to Luke 12. Jesus is teaching about the need to be ready at His Second Coming, and then in verse 41, Peter says, "Lord, you speaking to me?"—that's kind of the Philly version. He says, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?" Then Jesus gives another parable. Look at it [in] chapter 12:42–48:

And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

Now, without exegeting this entire parable, the lesson is simple: The faithful and unfaithful slave both receive knowledge and both receive resources to do the master's will. The faithful slave lives according to the knowledge and resources he has received and does the master's will. The unfaithful slave does not. When the master shows up unexpectedly, at an hour they do not know, the faithful slave is rewarded. The unfaithful slave is executed and hacked into pieces. Which one are you?

The summary of all this is found in the latter half of [Luke 12:]48: “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.” Beloved, you have been given much by way of knowledge and opportunity just by being here. When you look at the bulletin, think of condemnation for not obeying. There are so many opportunities there, they’re just crying out to you, “OK, here’s your opportunity.”

I don’t know if you’re saved or not saved, but I know that there are [people] in both categories [here] this morning, and you must live according to what you know. If you are not living for Christ, serving, giving, reading your Bible, praying, loving Christ, seeking to give Him glory in all that you do—I’m not talking about perfection, I’m just talking about as a general pattern of your life—don’t ever hope that you’re going to heaven. You call Him “Savior,” but He’s not *your* Savior. You call Him “Lord,” but He’s not *your* Lord. You do not do what He says, you do not follow Him, you do not love Him. You throw Him a few crumbs. That is not Christianity; that is not walking by faith. There is hell for people like that.

But there is a solution. God has provided for your sins by sending “the Christ, the Son of the living God” to die on the cross for you in substitution for your sins, so that you, if you are willing to believe—not just in the data, but believe so as to trust, receive, follow Jesus, turning from your sins—He will save you, He will put His Holy Spirit within you, and He Himself will cause you to walk in His ways. “He who begins a good work in you will perfect that work until the day of Christ Jesus” [see Philippians 1:6]. He will do it. That’s how you know whether you’re in or out.

You have to let go of selfishness, let go of your sin, your pride, your greed, your desire to have your own control, things your own way, your pleasures or whatever. You turn from that and you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting only in who He is and what He did to save you. [If] you do that, God will change you. He will make you into a new creature, and He will put you on the right path, and you will never be the same.

He can do it. Cry out to Him, and the judgment you deserve will be spent upon the Savior's head instead of [yours]. Knowing that truth *must* change the way you live. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You that we have seen such a great introduction to our text for next week, that Jesus is going to give some very hard calls, very hard calls, to His disciples and to us about what it means to be His follower. I pray this text causes us to search our hearts. If there is anybody here who doesn't know You, who just knows *about* You, who realizes he or she hasn't been born again, he or she hasn't been transformed, that he or she is, in fact, headed for hell and that if You came back like You could at any moment, he or she would not be rewarded but condemned, I pray that right now he or she would cry out in his or her heart and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, confess his or her sins, and make a commitment to turn from his or her sins, and to follow you. That he or she would believe not just with his or her mind, but with his or her will. Anyone who wills to receive Your Son, You give the gift of eternal life and call him or her your child. And, Father, for the rest of us who know You, I pray that our consciences would be soft, and if there are areas in our lives where we know we aren't giving You glory because of rationalizing, because of justifications, or pleasures, that we confess those and that we would be a holy church, a church that loves you with all our minds, all our souls, with all our hearts, and with all our strength [see Mark 12:30]. Help us to be this way for Your glory and our blessing. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

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