

Intro: Of all the things that we do as Christians, what is it that is utterly different than the world? It is not good deeds, is it? It is not singing. The world sings together. The world even prays together. The world listens to lectures or sermons on perceived truths and motivating messages. But in what meeting of the world do you find a prayer of *confession*? A prayer that acknowledges at the outset that we are incapable of even accomplishing what we set out to accomplish in this meeting with external intervention from the outside, without divine intervention? This attitude of gospel humility which accepts Jesus alone as the authority to restore, heal, and determine reality for us through His words and His works alone is the foundational Christian conviction of how we approach God rightly.

The unavoidable challenge that Jesus presents before all men is the call to *absolute* dependence, not merely for physical needs (although that is true as well), but a problematic call to absolute dependence for all truth, for all interpretation of reality, for all wisdom in knowing what is right and wrong and how to walk in it, for all life. This clarion call is problematic because it means that when we approach Jesus, one must come to him with this attitude: “You are absolutely right and I am absolutely wrong.” “You alone are completely capable. I am utterly incapable.” “You have all rights and power. I have no rights or power. You alone are worthy. I, and all others, are unfit.”

In this lengthy passage, Luke shows us two groups of people who refused to take Jesus on his own terms and instead had excuses readily available to explain why they could not *yet* accept His call to absolute dependence. Jesus reveals that under these excuses lie an insipid presupposition: they don’t want Jesus to be necessary. The excuses are merely a façade for a heart that does not care about the evidence, but is dead-set against Jesus’ rule and necessity as the exclusive way of salvation because if it is true that He is our only hope of salvation from this wrecked world, then that means that I have no power and He has all power and He can ask me to do anything, go anywhere, give everything, or serve anyone. Ah. Yes, He can. But in so doing we find that we live, really and fully live when we rest in Him. The Light of Life fills our hearts with the light of life as we behold Him and entrust ourselves to Him. Let’s take a look.

## 1. Jesus is Not an Amazing Superhero

### a. He cast out a demon of muteness

#### i. What would it be like to be unable to speak?

1. I have often wondered what goes on in Ricky’s soul when he cannot communicate what he really wants
2. Stroke victims feel trapped, constrained in the terrible confines of being unknown

#### ii. This muteness is demonic, comes from the Enemy of God and Man who desires to enslave and destroy God’s image-bearers

##### 1. The mute man’s condition represents the work of this enemy of God and Man

- a. Up to the coming of Christ, Satan always seemed to have the upper hand
- b. God was always rescuing, but it was always “barely” or in small numbers – Noah was 8 people rescued from judgment, the Tower of Babel scattered humanity, even Israel chosen by God spent most time in exile

##### 2. This man, created in the image of the speaking God, is bound in the power of evil so that he is not reflecting this image rightly and nobody could do anything about it

### b. Jesus confronts this evil and throws it down

#### i. The man speaks – restored to the image-bearing wholeness for which he was created

#### ii. Jesus has the power of the Kingdom of God, wholeness and restoration of the brokenness of this cursed age

#### iii. With the coming of Jesus the King, the Kingdom of God has arrived to break Satan’s power and usher in an age of restoration on a global scale – a reversal of Eden’s curse, Noah’s flood, a unity of multi-linguistic peoples in Christ reversing Babel, a kingdom eternal

### c. Marveling at Jesus is Not Enough

#### i. Amazement isn't the issue, submissive dependence to the King is the issue

#### ii. Thus, there is a greater confrontation happening than the mere demonic muteness of this man

#### iii. Luke only spends a few words on the demonic throw-down, but spends much more time and ink on the throw-down between Jesus and two groups who respond to His word and work

### d. There is No Middle Ground: Being Amazed is Not Enough, Only Absolute Dependence is Enough

#### i. That would involve confessing that Jesus is more than a mere prophet, but that He is the Son of God, for that is what Jesus claims to be



1. But this presupposition resists Christ as King with an irrational underlying resistance to God, the essence of our human sinful nature
2. No matter how much evidence is produced, the problem is not evidential
3. The real problem is *moral* and *volitional*
  - a. We do not want Him to be God
  - b. We do not want to answer to a just God
- ii. All of this to say that if the Kingdom of God has come upon you, then the King has all authority!
  1. There is no neutral ground
  2. You are either rejecting the King or subjecting yourself to the King by faith
- e. Jesus explains that the forces of evil are only overcome by a superior power
  - i. He is the stronger man who takes down the devil, and takes his power away
    1. He is not a friend of the enemy, but a liberator from the enemy
  - ii. A fully armed man is only overcome by a superior man
  - iii. No human being has that power, but the “finger of God” has that power
    1. God alone makes the Enemy flee
    2. Thus, the one who does these strong-man works, is the divine Savior-King, who has broken into history in weakness and comes with powerful word and works
    3. He comes to deal with the problem of evil and the wickedness of the human race as a Savior, a Rescuer, a Liberator
      - a. These are the dominant themes of Luke “Son of Man came to seek and save the lost”
  - iv. Jesus is the superior power, not a part of the Enemy forces
    1. Demons work together (grab 7 friends) to ruin what has been ordered, not the other way around
    2. Thus, if Jesus is setting people free, making the mute incommunicable man speak, then he is not of “the waterless places” but rather is against them
    3. Whomever is not with Him is against Him and scatters – if you are with him, the 7 cannot return for the strong man has taken residence, but if you are not with Him...
- f. Ultimately, what you believe about Jesus really matters
  - i. “Whomever hears the Word of God and keeps it is blessed”
  - ii. Any relationship but humble joyful submission to the Son of God, the Word of God, the Finger of God, is insufficient – Marveling is not enough

### 3. There is No Middle Ground of Amazed Cynical Skeptics

- a. These people are never satisfied with evidence, but are always demanding more and more signs and more and more evidences that Jesus is who He claims to be
  - i. This is a response to Jesus that claims that He hasn’t done enough to convince a person that He is either qualified or capable
  - ii. “Why doesn’t God just show up and make Himself known?”
- b. Another aspect of this is the rejection of the evidence that has been given, i.e. liberal scholarship pertaining to the Bible
  - i. Those miraculous, supernatural aspects of the New Testament are obviously made up to gain power in the early church and to squelch any opposition to the doctrines of Christ’s deity, the Trinity, penal substitutionary atonement, etc.
  - ii. Therefore, this is not enough evidence on which to believe that Jesus is the Son of God or that He alone can rescue humanity from its problems
  - iii. This rejection of the evidence, even though the manuscript evidence is extremely reliable and very early, shows the type of attitude for which there is a presupposition that Jesus cannot be what the New Testament reveals Him to be, thus we need better evidence, more signs from God
- c. This cynical skepticism hides under the façade of a logical, reasonable, evidence-based persona, but in reality it is an expression of a doggedly determined effort NOT to believe that Jesus is whom He says
  - i. Because it would mean that one utterly needs Him for salvation and that one absolutely must give allegiance to Him

- ii. We tend to trust our hearts more than history, and we tend to trust our own experience more than the expressed Word of God
    - 1. “If God parted the Red Sea for me, I would surely believe Him”
    - 2. That didn’t work for the Israelites, did it?
    - 3. Ultimately God raised Jesus from the dead – do you believe Him now?
      - a. This is the “sign of Jonah” – three days in the fish/tomb before emerging alive
  - d. We are culpable for this attitude, not God for giving less-than-needed evidence
    - i. Because it is based not upon the evidence it claims to demand, but rather upon a heart and will whose presuppositions are opposed to God, it gets a harsher reality check than the previous group!
    - ii. If these “sign-seekers” were truly seeking wisdom and were willing to go as far as was necessary to hear it, then they would have heard it in Christ’s words!
      - 1. Jesus calls his two witnesses: Queen of the South and Nineveh
        - a. If they were willing to seek it as far as the Queen of the South and if they were willing to repent at his word as the Ninevites to Jonah, then they would have found and heard truth in the words of Jesus.
          - i. NOTE: “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and do it!” (v28)
      - 2. There are people with less knowledge than them who believed what little evidence was given and believed His Word and acted accordingly!
        - a. The evidence is not the issue...humble dependence that acts is the issue!
      - 3. But they were not genuine questions or genuine seekers, but were rather excuse makers, like the child who asks the teacher a question on one of his hobby-horses so that he will avoid teaching on the next part of the subject
        - a. The problem is that their vision is obscured because of unbelief and are committed to unbelief and thus cannot see the bright light before them, Jesus
    - iii. These witnesses (Queen and Ninevites) will *condemn* this generation because they had less evidence (something greater than they had), yet they believed enough to travel and see, and to repent (in order)
      - 1. Think about this for us today: Who had more evidence?
      - 2. We have the New Testament, which they did not have, with the continuation of the story, and particularly the resurrection within history.
        - a. Evidence is not the issue, but the ignoring the evidence is the issue and the refusal to humbly depend (believe) in Jesus
4. Be Amazed *Believers*: You Become What You Behold!
- a. The problem with unbelief is not that it merely ignores the evidence, but it loves the darkness and hates the light which reveals our need and Christ’s majesty
  - b. Jesus is not the Light of God hidden under a bowl, but he is before them, preaching to them, casting out demons before their eyes!
    - i. The problem wasn’t that he was hiding, but that they had bad eyes, committed to darkness
      - 1. Light reveals the substantive reality, but if you don’t want to know the reality because it means humility, then you cannot let the light in
        - a. Like a child who refuses to open his eyes because it may mean that there is a monster in the closet
        - b. Or the one who closes her eyes on a roller coaster because the reality is that you’re not in control and are about to drop
      - 2. More precisely, we are blind in our sin and need an eye transplant by the grace of God
    - ii. Don’t come before God and claim that He hasn’t shown you enough when the only reason that you don’t believe is because of the darkness within you that you love (John 3:19)
      - 1. The Light is too convicting, too demanding of change, reveals too much of my weakness and need and powerlessness and failure and sins

2. Rather than let the Light do its work of conviction so that it might also reveal the hope of forgiveness, they refuse to deal with sin and instead remain in the dark where sin is obfuscated and the revelation of weakness labels God a bully
- iii. You see, when you are confronted with the words of Jesus, especially if you are a religious person, one of two things happen, and there is no third way: your heart is either softened to humble dependence, or it is hardened to a deeper darkness of self-dependence
  1. There is no third option of “nothing happening” when you hear or read the words of God
  2. “Today, when you hear these words, do not harden your hearts...” (repeated three times by the author of Hebrews in 3:8,15; 4:7)
- c. What you look upon is what fills your soul – “Beholding is Becoming”
  - i. What you look to for your hope is what you become
    1. Where do you look for hope? For joy? For salvation? For transformation?
    2. Are you religious, trusting in your own strength and performance, or people’s opinions?
    3. Are you Christian, trusting in the ONE in whom is the light of men which shines into the darkness and illuminates, the Life which conquers death?
  - ii. If darkness is what you look upon, darkness fills your heart
    1. Where do people “pack in” to see in our culture today?
    2. Are they packing into churches? Bible studies? Prayer groups?
    3. Or is it movie theaters? Concerts? Political rallies?
    4. How about you? What do you pursue, chase down, to whom do you leave the Southern Kingdom to find wisdom? At whose word do you put on sackcloth and sit in ashes in repentance?
  - iii. Jesus is the Light of the glory of God
    1. 2 Cor 4:4-6 – the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ
    2. Isaiah 60:1-2

#### Conclusion: LOOK UPON THE LIGHT OF JESUS CHRIST

1. Yes, it exposes darkness of your soul and reveals your utter need for a Savior outside of yourself
  - a. Unlike every religion or worldview, Jesus says that all that is in you is darkness and you need a light outside of yourself to shine into you, not merely upon you.
    - i. In Christ, we find that we are rescued and transformed not by our own performance but from the external performance of another
  - b. All we do is face Him in humble dependence, i.e. faith, with the kind of faith that acts upon the word which proceeds from the mouth of God because it believes it to be true
2. Yes, it exposes our sins but also reveals the King who pays down our sins and shares His inheritance with us
  - a. God is not against you in revealing our brokenness, but is working to show us His glory in Jesus as our Redeemer and Healer and Hope
3. Yes, it is your hope and certainty of life
  - a. Tyler Kenny: “The prophets spoke God’s very words. But Jesus is himself the very Word of God incarnate (John 1:1, 14). His message has exceeded the prophets, because it is the fulfillment of everything they had previously promised. He is the fulfillment.”
  - b. Seeing Him, savoring Him, setting today and tomorrow’s hope upon Him, clarifies our thoughts, renews our minds, transforms our affections to the joy for which we were created: holy love for God and others by holy faith in Christ alone with holy hope in His Spirit to seal and transform us
  - c. The One who was raised from the dead gives us hope of true life, for he has liberated not only the mute man who was possessed, but the dead man who was condemned to death because of the sin that was in him – I am that man condemned to death but rescued and redeemed by the holy love of the Savior King who shone His light into my heart by being swallowed up by my darkness.