

Jesus Reflects on his Mission - Rev David Parker

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[0:00] So if you can turn back with me to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 11, and the verses that we're going to be exploring today are verses 25-30.

! Matthew chapter 11, verses 25-30. At that time, Jesus declared, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things.

From the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

Are we, we Christians, are we justified in our view that Christianity is an utterly unique faith?

Even though we live in a pluralist culture and society, and the sort of idea from that pluralistic and cultural society is that surely all religions are equal.

[1:09] They're all going towards God. And it doesn't matter which religion that you are a member of. Are we justified in believing that Jesus is utterly unique?

Surely people might say, he's the prophet of your religion, but then there's the prophet of Islam, Muhammad. And there are other gurus and religious leaders.

Are we justified in believing that Christianity is unique and Jesus Christ is unique? Let me ask another question.

For whom does the church exist? I noticed a sign there, I can't quote it exactly, up on the wall at the back there.

Something to do with, you're entering a mission field. I'm quite interested in that quote that was by there in the wall, because what I think is happening in verses 25 to 30 is that Jesus is reflecting on his mission.

[2:26] What should be at the center of the church's life and existence? What should be at the center of the church's life and existence?

Jesus went through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease. By the way, can you sense as I can, I'm sure you must, the output of Jesus' mission and ministry.

He went through all the cities and villages, healing every disease and every affliction. And when he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

I want to ask a question just at this point. We're going to see the main three points that I'll be bringing from this chapter. But what do you see when you look at a non-Christian? What do you see when you look at a non-believer?

I was telling somebody as I came out the pathway of the man's and turned left to come towards the church, there was a man going in the opposite direction. I don't know where he was going.

[4:02] Maybe he was going to church. I gave him a wave and he gave me a wave back. But what do we see? Look what Jesus saw when he saw the crowds.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them. That's a mega powerful word. It kind of points to gut reaction, almost a strong feeling going on inside one's body.

Because he said they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Is that what happens to us when we see unbelievers?

Or do we think other things about them? The missionary activity of Jesus was colossal.

And that is a pointer to the question that I posed, for whom does the church exist?

[5:11] And your own quote there at the back of the wall. And in chapter 10, Jesus sends out the 12 disciples as part of his mission.

And towards the end of chapter 10, Jesus is upbraiding the people for their non-repentance and warning them about the judgment.

And I think, you see, that's what it means when our text that we're going to be looking at at that time.

It's at that time when Jesus was in full gear of his mission going through all the towns and cities and healing everybody. It's at that time when he said the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. It's at that time that he commissioned his disciples. It's at that time that he warned people that he had been proclaiming the gospel to that there's judgment.

[6:25] You see, when Jesus confronts somebody, you're confronted with the greatest ultimatum, if you like, that anybody could ever be confronted with. You cannot be neutral.

You either receive him or you reject him. And what Jesus is doing here, he's pausing for a moment and reflecting on his missionary experience.

And we're going to be looking at his reflection through three lenses. His praise of the Father, his pondering, his own relationship and identity to the Father and his proclamation.

We've already touched on his proclamation with the children. Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden. So, that's the three lenses that we're going to try and view what Jesus' reflection and the content of it.

First then, the praise of the Father. Look what he says there. At that time, Jesus declared, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

[7:54] Now, he's not literally here referring to little children. He's referring to his disciples. He's referring to the crowds that are following him as what we would say in Glasgow, the order of the 5-8.

And, I do not believe that Jesus, for a second, is, is, suggesting that there's something wrong by being intellectual or having great understanding.

What I think is happening is these reflections of Jesus are issuing from his experience. He has just been talking about all these people in those cities that he presented the gospel to and the Pharisees.

That's why we read on to the Sabbath issue and the controversy over that. And, and these great intellectuals of the law, God's law, Moses' law, the law of the rabbis and all that sort of stuff, these people are looking for a chance to kill him at the end of the day.

And, this is what Jesus means. He's not, he's not thinking abstractly or theoretically. He's thinking existentially. He's saying at that time Jesus declared I thank you Father this is out of my experience of mission to the people Lord of heaven and earth that you have hidden these things from the wise and the understanding.

[9:38] Now, there's certain mystery in that statement isn't there? And, it's a mystery that might be difficult to unravel but we don't want to go down that road just now.

But, what we know is existentially in the real life experience of Jesus these people were rejecting him and they were meant to be the experts. So, this is issuing from the experience of Jesus and you'll notice how when Jesus is reflecting on this the kind of things that he's reflecting he's saying you're the Lord of heaven and earth you're the one that ultimately remember what Jesus said in John chapter 10 my sheep hear my voice and they come to me and they will not follow another Jesus is reflecting on his experience and reflecting that the Father I want you to note the word Father here we'll see more of this word in a moment or two you've hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children

I also want you to notice that word revealed we'll just notice it just now we've been asking is Christianity unique yes why because it's a revealed religion Christianity does not originate from a human creativity Paul calls it God's gospel Christianity does not it's not the genius of a Mozart or the genius of an Einstein or the genius of anybody else Christianity is the revelation of God and of course as we know the supreme revelation of God is Jesus Christ did he not say he that hath seen me hath seen the Father so here he is reflecting on his mission at this point and he's reflecting in such a way that he's thanking God and so he should because because it's wonderful that this God has allowed his son to come to this earth and to reveal the father and to reveal the father's heart and the father's heart believe it or not is for us in spite of all our sins in spite of all our failures in spite of all our crucifixion of him in spite of us shaking the fist at him he's for us so there's the first sort of reflection revelation Christianity is a revealed religion and it's God that is doing that revealing and it's necessary that God reveals the truth about himself because only God can do that and the pinnacle and summit as I've said of God's revelation is Jesus Christ he that hath seen me hath seen

the father

Jesus you see is both redeemer and revealer and the two are intimately interconnected you can't have one without the other so Jesus is always both revealer and redeemer and Jesus reveals by action and word and miracles and healing he reveals by his language you know every single prophet in the old testament if they were saying I've got a word from God they would preface it by thus says the Lord it's not me that we're going back like that if you like it's but look what Jesus said I say unto you we are dealing and confronted with the Christ of God with the final not just the full but the final revelation of God and to reject Christ fully and completely is to reject the offer the brilliant offer because salvation is far more than the forgiveness of our sins it's being brought into a new humanity that

[14:20] Jesus is pioneering it's being brought into something in the future that's called a new heavens and a new earth it's being brought into what one of the writers of the gospel says the eye is not seen nor the ear heard what God has laid up for us no wonder the psalmist at the beginning there said let's enter his courts with joy!

have we got that joy? Have we got that Christ? And we'll cover this later on have we come to him? Because that's the secret and the dynamism of real biblical Christianity that we've come to Christ. Then Jesus ponders his role and his identity in this reflection of his mission.

Look what he says all things have been handed over to me by my father. What a statement eh? I mean the words of Jesus are either the words of a madman or they are words of the son of God who loved me and gave his life for me.

[15:48] Here he has the audacity in that culture of intense Jewish monotheism of only God can forgive sins.

God tells us that we're not to do this that and the next thing in the Sabbath. And here is Jesus reflecting on his mission and he says, note that word, all.

All things have been handed over to me by my father. And I want you to notice the pronoun there. My father. My father.

He just said father in the last statement. Now he's saying my father. This was electrifying at that time. Especially when Jesus spoke Aramaic.

And the word he would use there would be Abba. And that denotes the most exquisite and intimate relationship.

[16:57] relationship. And here is what Jesus is suggesting here. Regarding his own he's remembering who he is.

All things and he's remembering his mission. Now are we in Barvis, in Barvis congregation, in Lewis, in Glasgow, up north, down south, Jesus said I came to seek and save that which was lost. He sent his disciples out when he was still there and he's sending us out now. But are we going? Every single Christian is a missionary and every single Christian has its own mission field. Family, work, friends, neighbours, strangers. Mary and I go out walking every day and we meet people every day.

And of course, you meet people and you get talking to them and you show an interest in them. I mean a genuine interest.

[18:22] And a genuine interest in their what's going on in their lives if it's got to that stage. And it has with some of the people that we know. And possibly a bit easier for me and at some point I get round and say I'm a retired minister.

But I don't usually say that until I've forged some sort of relationship with them. All things have been handed over to me by my father.

What's he talking about? He's talking about the A to Z of his redeeming role. Ah, the father and the son are like that in this mission of redemption.

And then he says this, and this is really electrifying, this one. By the way, the crowds are still there, and they're hearing this, and so these Pharisees that are infiltrating the crowds, no one knows the son except the father.

Wow. But listen to this one, and no one knows the father except the son.

[20:11] there's nobody in this room knows the essence of the eternal God.

What we know is what has been revealed, and of course that supreme revelation is indeed, you know, written over the whole life of Jesus, every breath, every word, every action, written over all of that, every event that happened to him, everything that he did, written over that is, this is God.

No one knows the son except the father, and no one knows the father except the son. God's God. John's gospel, chapter 1, in the beginning, was the word speaking of Christ. The word was with God, and the word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God. This knowing is not theoretical knowing, it's not philosophical knowing, it's not epistemology, as philosophers would put it.

[21 : 40] The clue to this knowing is, remember when Jesus was baptized, and God spoke, this is my beloved son, from all eternity.

Yes, Christ is unique. no Muhammad, no guru, no Moses, no prophet in the Old Testament ever came anywhere near saying that their relationship with God was a mutual and eternal one.

yeah, so there is Jesus pondering his role and pondering his identity.

But as the time goes on, we come to the last bit of the lens that we're looking at Jesus' reflection here. We've seen him looking through the lens of praise for God revealing and hiding.

We didn't say much about hiding, but we don't have time to go into that. But I will say this to you, there's always, even with revelation and the revelation of God, there's always hiddenness.

[23 : 12] Take the full revelation of Jesus Christ. It was a man standing before the people. The sweat was pouring off his brow. He was tired at times. He was disappointed at times.

He got angry at times. Veiled in flesh. Notice that word, veiled, says the hymn. Veiled in flesh.

The Godhead see. Paradox and mystery. But not only is he praising God, not only is he pondering his own role, redemptive role, and his own identity with God, and his relationship with the Father, where it's so important to him in this mission, but he then addresses the crowd again for their need. Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. What words again, eh? What arrogance if that's not the Son of God. all of you come to me. We have to make a spiritual journey to Jesus Christ, if we've not already done so.

[24 : 47] there needs to be a movement of our will, a movement of our mind, a movement of our heart to Jesus.

It means that we come to him in that mindset and receive him as our eternal Savior.

to be part of this glorious mission of his, of the new humanity and the new heavens and the new earth.

Have you come? I think the world today is indeed burdened and heavy laden.

We are living in an uncertain world today, are we not? We wonder what kind of world is stretching ahead for our children and grandchildren, do we not?

[26 : 02] We are aghast that defense majors and generals and experts are writing in our ordinary newspapers saying, prepare for another international war in three years.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. These are beautiful words, for I am gentle and lowly in heart. Now in Jesus' day, the rabbis and the teachers of the law had heaped so many do's and don'ts and rules upon the chest of the people.

And rather than the people feeling joy and feeling liberated and redeemed, be toiled.

I wonder if you're feeling a bit burdened, if you are, as we were saying to the children, there's a wonderful hymn, burdens are lifted at Calvary.

Make your way there. because he took our burden of guilt and sin on his own shoulders and cast it into the sea of forgetfulness.

[27 : 51] have you come? Have you taken Christ's yoke?

Yes, if you become a Christian, you'll also become his servant. But as a yoke was shared between two animals, Christ will walk with you.

and there used to be an idea that Jesus, as a carpenter and his father, made some of the best yokes for oxen in their day, smooth and not irritating or burdensome.

And perhaps that's what Jesus is thinking about when he says, take my yoke upon you. I love that phrase, and learn of me. Oh, it's so wonderful to learn of Jesus Christ, who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, of our weakness, of our fragility.

We'll hear something of that tonight, of our frailty. I am with you, says Jesus, to the end of the world.

[29 : 11] Do you have him as your saviour? May it be so for every one of us, and may the Lord bless these thoughts to all of us for his glory, and for our eternal good.

We pray, oh God, that you would speak to us, Lord, deep in our hearts, that we will hear your voice, Lord.

Amen. we're going to conclude then in Psalm 2, Psalm 2, and it is from the traditional Psalter, and we're going to sing verses 7 to 12, the sure decree, I will declare, the Lord has said to me, thou art mine only son, this day I have begotten thee.

Let's be upstanding for this final praise. may may may may may The Father here has loved me and for heretic The hidden eye divine

And for a protection I to thee Will give us the utmost light Thou shalt us with a weighty heart Of thy Lord make them warm And as the water shepherds not Then God shed me in his eyes Thou therefore kings be wise

[32 : 18] Be taught in judges of the earth Circle in fear and see that ye Thy breath we pray to her Is ye the sun blessed in his eye Ye perish from the wind If once it's time And be in to her Blessed all the blood of all on his sea

Let's receive God's blessing May the love of God our Father The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ And the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit Be with you all now and forevermore Amen