

5/4/25

Who Are We in Christ?

John 12:21

Pastor Joe Greemore, Brewster Baptist Church

*Let the words of my mouth
and the meditations of my heart
be pleasing to you,
LORD, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14, CEB)*

A Festive Celebration

Thank you, Corbany and Addyson Greemore and David Wilcock, for sharing God's Word with us today. A few scriptures for suggested reading along with this week's message: *Zechariah 9:9; Philippians 2:1-11; and Colossians 1:15-20, 2:6-7, 3:12-17*. Thank you, Al Ferioli, for sharing such a moving testimony this week, to Gwyneth Preu for reaching out to Al, and to Sharon Kautz for recording his testimony. You can find the full testimony with Al's story through the link on today's *Buzz*. Truly, *God is at work changing hearts and lives!*

This is Brewster in Bloom weekend, when we throw a kind of community party to show off God's creation and the work of many hands. We kicked off the weekend with a band concert in this space with the ever-amazing Brewster Band, then enjoyed a meal together last evening to decorate a float, and today we continue the celebration with a parade after our morning services. It's an exciting and beautiful time to be on the Cape. Such was the setting for today's sermon scripture, which Corbany and Addyson read for us: a moment buzzing with activity and thrumming with festive fanfare...

Jesus had been anointed at Bethany for his burial and made his triumphal entry, riding into Jerusalem humbly, seated on a donkey — in stark contrast to a conquering general entering the city on a warhorse at the head of an armed host. *The Jewish festival* and feast of *Passover* was at hand. *Lazarus had been raised* from the dead. The air was *positively charged* with nervous, anxious energy, from secret whispers and worshipers to jubilant "Hosannas" from thronging crowds, as they publicly declared Jesus' arrival. What might Jesus do next? Not all the murmurs were positive, for while some found great delight in the healing, restoring work of Jesus, others felt threatened, thinking that their power would be in jeopardy if his power was left unchecked.

Into that plot thick with action and rife with anticipation, a group of Greeks came to Philip, one of Jesus' disciples who had a Greek name (Philip was from Bethsaida in

Galilee), hoping that, through their common connection and fraternity of Greekness, he might become a bridge for them to this Jewish Messiah, Jesus. The name “Philip” reminds us — and perhaps reminded them, too — of Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great and the man after whom the city of Philippi was named. After Jesus’ earthly ministry, the apostle Paul would send words of encouragement to the believers gathered there, which we know as the letter to the Philippians. Paul’s letter was one filled with joy in the Lord.

This encounter between Philip and the Greeks was also a thing of joy, a beautiful picture of bringing others to the Lord, of how the relationships we build, the company we keep, the openness we model, *even the circumstances of our birth* and our nationality, can become a platform for bringing others to Jesus. You see, these fellow Greeks wanted to do more than simply spend time with Jesus. Although being in his presence was miracle enough and cause for great celebration, on a deep level, they wanted to come and see for themselves, to experience the man for whom this good news had traveled far and wide. In so doing, they were hoping to understand more clearly what this Jesus and his work were all about. They desired an opportunity to take a deep, soulful look, to glimpse beyond the surface and behold Jesus, to see for themselves that he is the reason for all that we do and the source of divine joy and inspiration.

How often do people come to us to see Jesus more fully, hoping, through our common connection, to get a glimpse of the Messiah? The world is longing to behold him.

Notice that, rather than sending for Jesus to come to them, they came seeking Jesus on his terms. Here is an important reminder that in life we must accept people as they are, not as we would have them be — on their terms, not on our terms. Jesus, the eternal Lord, took on human flesh to show that he came to live life on our terms; he did not insist on his own. Even to the bitter end, Jesus submitted to life on humanity’s terms, then gave us all the chance to see how sweet life could be if we accept it on his terms: unconditional love, total surrender, full assurance, powerful peace.

The broader Hellenistic world had come to Jesus, and the fact that the Gentiles were asking to see him was validation for our Lord that his earthly ministry had reached far and wide beyond his own Jewish people, the flock he had come to save, and had touched the lives of God-fearing, Greek-speaking people and folk in many, various places. The confirmation of God’s voice, John’s witness, Jesus’ works, and the

scriptures, all testified to his Lordship. In Jesus, the darkness had turned to dawning, and the dawning to noonday bright. In the person of Jesus, God's great kingdom had come to earth, a kingdom of love and light.

Rooted in Faith

Over the next several weeks of "Rooted in Faith", our church will explore questions that give us insight into What Baptists Believe. We will be exploring things like church membership, the power of personal testimony, being divine image bearers, holy communion, baptism, and much more about how we can access our historic faith in everyday terms to live well, serve generously, and love as fully as God loves.

Today, like those Greeks who came to Philip, we begin with an intention and an invitation for deeper exploration, a question that gives direction and foundation to all the other questions to follow: "Who Are We in Christ?" Alongside that question, it is also important for us to ask, "Who is Jesus Christ?"

Why does it matter what we believe about who Jesus is, and how does that have an impact on our daily lives?

What we believe about Jesus impacts everything we are and do — how we treat others, how we make plans, how we spend time in prayer, how we handle our possessions, and how often we participate in church and Christian fellowship. Author Charles M. Sheldon, who ministered to a church in my hometown, Topeka, KS, wrote a narrative story about how it would look if we let every choice we made in life be guided by the Lord. Those who accepted the challenge discovered the results of this kind of living to be nothing short of absolutely transformative!

As Baptists, we believe in the Supremacy, or Lordship, of Jesus Christ. This means that, every day, our every decision is to be *governed* and *guided* by the Lord Jesus. The book of Hebrews, which provides a link between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, tells us that Jesus is supreme above all things, better in every way than anything or anyone who came before (*Hebrews 1-4; Colossians 1:18*). Somewhere in the neighborhood of 300 scriptures from the Old Testament are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. The implications for us are that a vital, living link exists between the Old Testament and the New Testament in which Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets, the Psalms and the writings. In the Four New Testament Gospels — Matthew,

Mark, Luke, and John — which provide a picture of Jesus' life and teachings, we see that Jesus preaches God's love, grace, mercy, truth, and forgiveness, and, like any good pastor, Jesus practices what he preaches.

If we based our life, teaching, and manner of living entirely and exclusively upon Jesus' life, teachings, and manner of living, what a different world ours could be.

Imagine, if you will, a world where God's love is the currency, God's grace provides shelter for all, God's truth is our sustenance — a world where no one goes hungry, naked, or without adequate housing. *What a world that would be!*

Each of us grew up with a different perspective of the world — how people should act, relate to each other, speak with one another, even what we ought to believe. Our family, where we lived, our environment — all different. That's why it's important to ask questions like, "What *do* Baptists believe?" — not as a litmus test for uniformity, but rather, by way of invitation to deeper conversation, as a way of providing clarity, common ground, and proclaiming the worth of the incredibly valuable truths we hold dear. For me, that included a little church just down the street from my house in northeast Kansas, a church where I was baptized, at 11 years old, in June of 1993.

That church taught me much about what it means to be in Christ: to value God's Word, to attend church regularly, to love others and be part of God's family, and to be eager to learn and willing to forgive. In a deeply significant way, it gave me a rich appreciation of music in worship. I love how they planted a seed in me that would grow to bear fruit for years to come, and how my maturing as a little plant rooted in the good soil of faith, bearing fruit for Jesus, was watered and nurtured by Baptist expressions of faith, churches, and traditions. I made a public profession of faith at that little Community Christian church that my family could celebrate and support. I will never forget the feeling of joy of being baptized into the Lord by Pastor John Hannah, of accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

In our culture, we have this idea that Jesus is one's personal Lord and Savior and that faith is a private thing. That's true, and it's also true that faith is a public, communally shared, precious thing — both that **Jesus is the Savior of the whole person and of the entire world**. We can lean into the reminder that Jesus came just for us personally, and Jesus came to save everyone who ever lived.

What Baptists Believe

We believe that Jesus is God's Son; conceived by the power of God's Holy Spirit; born to a virgin, his mother, Mary; cared for by Joseph, the carpenter; that he grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and people (*Luke 2:52*); that he, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, shows us the way to God the Father (*John 14:6*); that he is the fulfillment of scripture, and that he is both fully human and fully divine.

As Baptists, we believe that we have no ultimate authority other than Jesus Christ, who intercedes before God on our behalf (*Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1; John 17*). We believe that he lived, taught, had a human family, was crucified, died, and was raised by the power of Almighty God. We believe that he reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever, and that this impacts our eternity and our everyday decision making, the choices we make, and how we allow God to lead and shape our lives. We believe that:

Jesus, the Word of God, became flesh.
 Jesus, the Son of God, became human.
 Jesus, the Lord of All, became a servant.
 Jesus, the Righteous One, was made sin.
 Jesus, the Eternal One, tasted death.
 Jesus, the Risen One, now lives in our hearts.
 Jesus, the Seated One, is coming again! – *Anonymous*

(*Philippians 2:1-11*) Jesus came as the visible manifestation of the invisible God, as the tangible representative of the intangible Creator of the universe (*Colossians 1:15*). Every song we sing is a hymn of gratitude or a song of praise to the majesty of King Jesus. In words reminiscent of Al Ferioli's testimony, poet Carol O'Neil shares how Jesus, the Savior, can change a life.

I found love and joy today.
 A man called Jesus walked my way.
 Tender, kind, compassionate, too.
 He changed my heart and made it true.

Jesus, blessed Jesus —
 Your gift of life for all
 Forever we will show you love
 Perfected in your great kingdom above

Jesus, blessed Jesus.
 We praise Your Holy Name. Tender, humble, merciful too
 The Savior has come that we might be made New.
 Dear Lord Jesus, oh, how we love you.

You bore the marks of all our sins.
 Your body bruised and torn by men
 Crying aloud Your only thought:
 “Forgive them, Father, they know not — what they do.”

You died for us that we might live.
 You gave us all you had to give.
 You paid the price that we might know
 The joy of life — abundantly so.

Thank you, sweet Jesus. We praise your Holy Name.

The Supremacy of Jesus Christ is an intersection of the already and the not yet.

During his earthly life, Jesus’ supremacy was never autocratic or dictatorial, but submissive, servant-hearted, and generous. When he comes again, every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (*Philippians 2:9-11*)

During his earthly life, our Lord Jesus healed and liberated from bondage and sin; in his resurrection, he conquered death, and when he comes again, he will restore and redeem all the work he began. In his earthly life, Jesus, the Master, Rabbi, teacher, and friend, gave us an invitation to enjoy God’s presence; after he arose, he sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts, to lead and guide us into all truth, and when he returns, we shall be reunited with him.

Death and sorrow will be no more. Shame and suffering will be done for. Only God’s love and light will remain for us to adore.

Jesus’ word is trustworthy. His character is reliable, his ways are always true, and his salvation is sure. If you don’t know Jesus as your Savior and Lord, I appeal to you to be reconciled to God today through the unending love of God’s Son, Jesus. If you feel a rift with someone in the body of Christ and your relationship isn’t perfectly restored and redeemed, I appeal to you to reach out with the love, patience, forgiveness, peace, and

strength of Christ today to live in the reality of a fully restored relationship. He came to save me, he came to save you, and he even came to save *us*, too.

He proved the depths of his sacrificial love for all, which we celebrate today in the Lord's Supper. By his life, we have the hope, the promise, and the gift of eternal life. The Greeks who came seeking Jesus sought the *Christ*, the Messiah. Those who walk with Jesus today still see him and feel his comfort and his peace.

Who are we in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Like those Greeks, we are seekers who long for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. Like Philip and the disciples, we are in a unique position with a unique story to tell. Like the crowds that thronged Jerusalem at his entry, we are mixed in our experiences and expectations, hoping for God to fulfill promises for our liberation and blessing.

In him, we are more than conquerors (*Romans 8*).

In Jesus Christ, we are redeemed.

In him, we are holy and justified before God.

In him, we are deeply loved, for God is love.

In him, we are satisfied, finding that he is enough.

In Christ, we are people of Good News.

Let's join with others in proclaiming that good news and live it to the full.

I invite you to join me in a spirit of prayer.

Merciful, Loving Lord, thank you that you are our Savior. As we examine our faith and think about the ways the world needs you, the author of our salvation, and the finisher of our faith, help us not to be slow to share the Good News of your life-giving love with others. Through our lives, may others see Jesus. We pray in His strong name. Amen.

Scriptures for Suggested Reading:

Zechariah 9:9; Philippians 2:1-11; Colossians 1:15-20, 2:6-7, 3:12-17

Questions for Conversation

1. When did you publicly proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord of your life? How did that make a difference in you as a person, and how does it continue to make a difference in your life today?
2. How does an attentiveness to Jesus' words, actions, life, and teachings shape and influence our words, actions, life, and teachings?
3. What do you hope to learn and implement from this series about being "Rooted in Faith: What Baptists Believe"?
4. How does the Lordship of Jesus Christ make a difference in our church, town, on the Cape, and in the world?
5. How many Old Testament scriptures were fulfilled in Jesus, and what is the significance for us as we study scripture?
6. What are the most important elements of being a Christian in 2025?

Sermon Snapshot

As Christians, we are called to bear good fruit (*Galatians 5:22-23*). In order to do so, we must abide in Jesus (*John 15:15*). Join us for a nine-week journey of being Rooted in Faith (Series Theme Scripture: *Ephesians 3:16-19*), as we ask questions about our historic faith and its implications for our world, relationships, and day-to-day living. Together, we will seek to learn about the preciousness of our distinct faith and how to live well, serve generously, and love fully, just as God loves, in a changing world. This week, we begin by asking the question, "Who are We in Christ?" as we discover What Baptists Believe about the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Please let us know how we can pray for you and encourage you on your journey.