

August 9, 2020

Romans 10:5-17

“Jesus is Lord!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 North Oakland Ave.
Decatur, Illinois 62526

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Jesus is Lord!” This statement is one of the earliest and shortest New Testament statements of the Christian Faith. It is packed full of meaning, as we shall soon see. Paul tells us in our epistle lesson that the word of faith we proclaim - **“Jesus is Lord!”** - is in our mouth and in our heart. We believe, therefore we speak. So it is not simply saying **“Jesus is Lord!”** that makes one a Christian, for as Jesus remarks, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven (Matt. 7:21-23).” And what is the will of the Father? Jesus says, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent (John 6:29).” And those who believe struggle to flee evil works.

Again, the word of faith we proclaim is in both our mouth and in our heart, Paul writes. We believe, therefore we speak. So, the expression **“Jesus is Lord!”** is a creedal statement, for it sets forward what we believe and confess in shorthand. As pieces of metal are collected to stamp one metal coin, so is a creedal statement a collection of bits and pieces of truth that present a whole. It is kind of like being in an airplane and you are looking out the window to see what’s below. The bits and pieces that we saw on the ground are now in one look. The higher you fly, the more bits and pieces of what you saw on the ground are brought together. This is why a simple creed can be unbelievably packed with truth.

Perhaps I can say it a little bit differently. At first glance, **“Jesus is Lord!”** might give one the distinct impression that there really isn’t much to Christianity. But when you focus on the words, you will find that you are in a whirlwind of bits and pieces of truth that require deep contemplation that leads to rigorous self-examination. When you hear someone announce, “we have no creed but Christ,” it may sound devoutly religious, but it is misleading. Most of the time it is a covert way to reduce the teachings of the church to a feel good statement that avoids the hard and painful truths. Sooner or later you have to say something about Christ, which is your creed. Lest we forget, Jesus says at the close of his earthly ministry, after his resurrection and before his ascension: “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled (Luke 24:44).” That means that Jesus Christ is the heart and center of Scripture.

At this point, I am hoping that you will not be surprised to hear me say that the statement - **“Jesus is Lord!”** - is really a bird’s eye view of all that is about the person and work of our Savior, whether it was prophecy about him or fulfilled in him. If you have any doubt about the magnitude of all of this, then perhaps Paul will put it into perspective in Philippians 2:5-11. Please keep in mind before we read these verses that the apostle is unpacking the statement **“Jesus is Lord!”** for he says that “every tongue [should] confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father.” He writes:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every

name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What we glean from this passage is that the confession - "Jesus Christ is Lord" - is about the entire humiliation and exaltation of our Savior; that is, his entire life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and everything that is even continuing now. So, "**Jesus is Lord!**" is the title of the faith, or the body of teaching that makes Christianity what it is and will be forever. With that in mind, let's take a peek at where the words "**Jesus is Lord!**" lead us.

To begin with, we have the word "Jesus." I cannot think of a better way to define this word than the way in which the angel defined it when he gave it to Joseph to name the baby conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. When Joseph planned to divorce Mary quietly, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Then Matthew comments (Matthew 1:18-25), "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel,' which means, God with us."

The name "Jesus" captures the whole content of Scripture, letter and Spirit, law and gospel, death and resurrection, sin and salvation, darkness and light. With the mere mention of the name, we are plunged into the depths of the very person and work of Christ so that we see a human being who is God with us. We are brought to the destiny of the baby. He will die for the sins of the world. He is the one promised in the garden who is the offspring of the woman who will overcome sin, death, and the devil for humanity. Like Paul shows us, we are in the humiliation and exaltation of the Savior who is both Man and God. There is nothing then in Scripture that does not pertain to these truths. As all creeds do, they take us to the truth, and the unity of that truth, and even the oneness of those who know and believe the truth. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him.

Jesus is "Lord." He is "Yahweh." What that means is understood in the book of Exodus 3:13-15. Just listen to this passage and prayerfully begin to realize the magnitude of what it means to say that Jesus of Nazareth is Lord. In the account of the burning bush that does not burn up, Moses records:

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

It takes my breath away. "Lord" means "I am who I am." Here we are brought to the reality that the Lord is the one who exists neither from nor in another. "**Jesus is Lord!**" All other things that exist

are from, in, and through the Lord. He is the unchangeable one. “I am/Lord” has attached to himself the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This covenant is succinctly defined in the words of Leviticus 26:12, “I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.” As Walter R. Roehrs correctly comments: “This promise was God’s covenant in its simplest form. God proclaimed and effected this pact in order to restore His estranged creatures to a blissful communion with Him.”

Jesus is the fulfillment of the covenant - his blood for the forgiveness of sins. The Lord is revealed through the second person of the Trinity who became a man to live a perfect life and die on the cross for our sins. What the devil tried to frustrate - that we would become eternal companions of the Lord - cannot be frustrated. The Lord is Lord over the devil and his minions who wish to accuse humans and demand that they pay the price for what they have done. But, in Jesus, the Lord himself has paid the price and has defeated sin, death, and the devil and his minions. It is the Lord who has done this so that, as it says in Revelation, concerning his bride the church: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God ... (21:3).”

So, do you think that the expression “**Jesus is Lord!**” points to a superficial Christianity? Not at all! It certainly wasn’t so for the early Christians. They saw it as the content of their faith and their witness to the world. So much so, that they were willing to die for it.

Polycarp, a hearer of the apostle John, was the pastor of the church in Smyrna and died for the faith in February, 156 A.D. On the way to his trial, two of the Roman soldiers guarding him took pity on him because he was an old man. They urged him to go through the required ceremony and thus avoid death. “What harm is there,” they asked, “in saying that ‘Caesar is Lord’ and offering the customary sacrifice if it could save your life?” Polycarp remained steadfast. Before he was burned at the stake he was again urged to hail the emperor as Lord and renounce the Lord Christ. Again he refused in these courageous words: “Eighty and six years I have served Him and He never did me any injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior (ANE, 1, p. 41)?”

“**Jesus is Lord!**” Christians of the past were willing to lose everything and even die for what they knew and believed. How about you? With the way things are going today in the world you may soon get to find out.

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott