I’ve felt challenged this week that my understanding of who Jesus is and what he came to do is too small. Of course I know that Jesus is the Christ but how much difference does that actually make to my life. I think if I had a better understanding of who the Lord Jesus Christ truly is it would make a substantial difference to how I live my life. I think this is a challenge for all of us: How big is your vision of Christ?

We’ve reached the end of the first half of Luke’s amazing gospel. We’ve reached the pivotal point of the whole book. Since the very first chapter Luke has been showing us his carefully researched, historically accurate evidence for the true identity of Jesus. From the very start he’s showed us the extraordinary nature of his birth, foretold by angels and celebrated by kings. He recorded the amazing events of his baptism when God the Father confirmed Jesus as his Son. We’ve seen how Jesus resisted temptation and resisted the devil. We’ve seen how amazing his teaching was. We’ve seen how he called people to follow him and the incredible difference it made to their lives.

Evidence upon evidence testifying to the extraordinary reality of who Jesus is. Luke proves to us time and again that this amazing man, Jesus, has all power and authority over nature, all power and authority over sickness, all power and authority over the spiritual world, all power and authority even over death. Even more fantastic than that Luke has shown time and again that Jesus has the authority and the power and the desire to forgive sins.

Jesus is clearly amazing. The whole book has been building to this point, the identity of Jesus has been proven; there can be no doubt. As Peter says to Jesus in verse 20, “You are the Christ of God.” The Christ has come. The King has come. God’s king has arrived which means the Kingdom of God had arrived.

The Christ is a title, it’s not a surname. The Christ is the same word as Messiah. It’s the person that the entire Old Testament is about. The Christ is the king who would come and sort out all the problems in the world caused by sin. It’s the king who would usher in a new age when God’s people would live with God in his kingdom under his perfect rule. It’s the moment that all creation had been patiently waiting for. When the Christ arrived it made all the difference in the world.

Do we have too small a view of Jesus? Maybe we see him as our brother and our friend; and of course he is that. Maybe we see him as gentle Jesus meek and mild; and he’s that too. But, if that is all we see when we think of Jesus we have far too small a vision of him.
Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is God who became a man to be God's eternal King. He has ALL power and ALL authority over absolutely EVERYTHING. The king has come and that fact affects each and every person in the world. You can’t choose to take it or leave it and decide whether to pay him any attention or not. If we recognise who Jesus truly is he demands all of our attention.

I think the greatest barrier to us being effective at evangelism is that our vision of Christ is too small. Yes, we believe it for ourselves; we believe that Jesus is our personal Lord and Saviour. But, when we fail to prioritise evangelism, I think it stems from the fact we don’t really understand how important the Christ is. We don’t really believe that the Christ is God’s all powerful, eternal King. We don’t really believe that is relevant for absolutely everyone.

I heard a great definition of evangelism last week when I was away on a conference. Evangelism – making public your inner conviction about Christ. Basically, it’s letting other people know why you think Jesus is so amazing. And if we have too small a view of who Jesus is, we will not have an inner conviction that drives us to tell others about the incredible news that Jesus is the Christ.

**The Christ has come the Good news must go out**

The King has come; the Kingdom of God has arrived. That fact is so important that Jesus equipped and delegated his authority to the Apostles to go out and preach the kingdom of God.

This passage, from Luke 9, is all about the fact the Christ has come, therefore the Good news must be proclaimed. And in these verses we see 2 ways of responding to the amazing news that Jesus is the Christ of God.

**Response 1 – Reject Jesus as the Christ**

**NIV Luke 9:1** When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He told them: “Take nothing for the journey-- no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.” So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere. Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life.
But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him. When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida,

Jesus delegated his power and authority to the Twelve. And he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God. He sent them out, to use the language of verse 6, to preach the gospel. The word gospel simply means momentous good news. It’s news that would announce a great victory, something that is of significance to everyone who hears it. And this good news is that God’s eternal king had arrived..

Clearly many people responded positively to their preaching, see verse 6. But, Jesus told them what to do if people rejected the message. In places where they weren’t welcomed they were to shake the dust off their feet. That was a biblical sign of judgement. It was a sign that the person wanted nothing more to do with that place. They had rejected the good news about the kingdom of God and therefore they themselves would be rejected.

Jesus says exactly the same thing in Revelation 3. If we don’t confess Christ. That is if we don’t acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Saviour, if we don’t tell other people about Jesus. If we don’t testify that Jesus is the Christ then he will not acknowledge us. He will not confess us. If we’re ashamed to tell others about Jesus, watch out, as he will be ashamed to acknowledge us.

And that makes verses 7-9 quite challenging. It’s not enough to just say that Jesus was a great man. It’s not enough to say that he was a prophet. It’s not enough to say that Jesus was a messenger from God. Herod realised there was something special about Jesus, but he didn’t recognise him as God’s king, the Christ. He actively rejected the truth that Jesus was the King. And his rejection of Jesus as the Christ led him to be actively involved in killing him.

Jesus is God’s king and he has all power and authority. Failing to recognise Jesus as the Christ is the same as rejecting Jesus.

Imagine you meet the Queen. You’re very respectful of her; very nice to her, you listen to what she has to say. But, imagine you don’t treat her like a Queen, you don’t stand up when she enters the room, you interrupt her when she’s speaking, you disagree with her. You listen to her for a bit, then walk out. That’s hugely disrespectful, she is our monarch she is our Queen. Admittedly, the consequences of doing that today aren’t that severe. But, imagine acting like that in Queen
Elizabeth the Firsts time! You’d have had your head chopped off before you’d have a chance to blink! That was treason. That was to abuse the power and authority of the monarch.

Now, the Queen is only a temporary monarch with very limited powers. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Christ, the Messiah is God. He has all power and authority to treat him as only a wise man, a great teacher, a healer or miracle maker is to utterly reject him as King.

Now, I’m sure most of us who are Christians would say that we believe Jesus is the Christ of God. But, do we show by the way we live our life that we don’t really believe what we say. Are we more concerned with what other people think than of what God’s king thinks? Or do we think that telling our friends and family about the true identity of Jesus isn’t worth the effort because God’s king isn’t really powerful enough to save them, they’re too far from Christian stuff to be saved.

The Christ has come; the Good news must go out. God’s king has arrived with all power and authority. The offer of being part of the wonderful kingdom of God is open and available to all. All we need to do is recognise Jesus as both our Saviour and our Lord. We need to treat him like the king he is. And then we need to make sure we let as many people as possible know the amazing news that God’s eternal king has arrived. We need to tell them and then pray they will respond as Peter did in verse 20.

**Response 2 – Recognise Jesus as the Christ**

**NIV Luke 9:11** but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. 

12 Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." 

13 He replied, "You give them something to eat." They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish-- unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." 

14 (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." 

15 The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. 

16 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. 

17 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 

18 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" 

19 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." 

20 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."
The miracle of feeding the 5,000 is a sure sign that God’s king had arrived. It’s a vivid symbol that God’s kingdom had arrived. In his carefully researched account Luke has deliberately placed this account here; between Herod’s confusion about the identity of Jesus and Peter’s declaration that Jesus is the Christ. This account is the final proof about the true identity of Jesus as God’s eternal king.

This crowd is massive; they’re way out in the sticks, there’s no food. The disciples want to send them away. Jesus tells them to find some food. Comically they say we’ve got 5 loaves and 2 fish, that’s really not going to go very far. But, Jesus knew who he was; he got them to sit in groups of 50. Jesus gave thanks for the food, broke it and there was enough food, miraculously provided to feed that vast crowd. And not just enough to stave off starvation, they were all satisfied and there were 12 baskets of leftovers. This was bountiful provision.

In the Old Testament God provided for his people, the Israelites when they were wandering in the desert for 40 years. God had rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. And God promised he would bring them into the Promised Land. And on the journey to that land he miraculously fed them. Each day he would send manna from heaven, basically sweet bread, so they could eat. God miraculously provided for his people back then. You can read about that in the book of Exodus. This miracle of Jesus is supposed to make us think that Jesus is doing what God did back then. Jesus will rescue God’s people, he’ll provide for them and bring them safely into the Kingdom of God, the true promised land.

This miracle fulfils what is described from our first reading in Isaiah. NIV Isaiah 25:6 On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples,

9 In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

This event is recorded for us to make us realise that Jesus is the Christ, God’s eternal King, and he has come to His kingdom.

We’re told to tell others about the kingdom of God. How do we do that? Well we tell people about our inner conviction about the true identity of Jesus. He is the Christ.

There is a danger that we’ll wait for people to come to us. We’re a reasonably sized church; there are new people here most weeks. The church is reasonably full so why should I bother
evangelising? But, that is terribly dangerous position for us to be as a church. The truth is, in 10 years time how many of us will still be here? Many of us will have moved on. Some will have moved on to other parts of the world, and others will have moved on to eternity. If we don’t work hard at telling people about Jesus we will stagnate as a Church and then die out. Now, I know there are some of you who are passionate about evangelism. But, I also think many of us think it’s someone else’s job.

Very excitingly we have a Christianity Explored course starting on Tuesday. There will be about 9 of us on it. Every single one is coming as a result of being part of church, no one has managed to find a friend or a colleague to bring along. There might be many reasons for that, but I suspect the main reason is that most of us haven’t been brave enough to actually invite someone along. Most of us don’t really believe how important it is for us to tell other people that Jesus is the Christ.

If you avoid talking to others about your faith, ask yourself the question, why am I not willing to talk to other people about my inner conviction that Jesus is the Christ?

If you want help to know what to say please come and talk to me afterwards.

Luke has patiently and in great detail proved that Jesus is the Christ. The news that the Christ has come is the most significant news anyone can ever hear. Are we so enraptured by our amazing King that we’re desperate to tell others that Jesus is God’s eternal king?

If Jesus were to ask you the question he asked the disciples in 9:20, how would you respond? If Jesus asked you, “what about you? Who do you say I am?” Would you reply like Peter did, “You are the Christ of God.” If so that is the most momentous news you will ever hear. It’s news that makes all the difference in the world.

The Christ has come – the Good news must get out!

Let’s pray!