

christ is not a swear word!

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Sunday Sermon for 4 March 2012

Scripture Passage John 1:40-45, Matthew 16:13-16

When I was a student I was a truck driver. I have heard every swear word invented. But I'll be honest, I get quite upset when people mess up or whatever, and you hear them exclaim, Oh Christ! You never hear anyone say, Oh Buddha, or oh Ghandi. Christ is not a swear word. It is a word that is at the very heart of the identity of Jesus. It is a profound title for Christ. It declares that he is the anointed one of God.

As we explore the identity of Jesus, discover who he really is, Jesus makes great claims about himself. They sound almost outrageous.

I am the light of the world. I am the way, truth, the life. I am the bread of life.

This is what prompted CS LEWIS to say, Jesus is either a lunatic, a liar or LORD!

This morning, I am the Christ or I am the Messiah.

Messiah is the OT word. It means the one who is anointed. Christ is greek. Christos = anointed. So Christ and Messiah are the same title.

Every time Jesus says I am, he is going back to some description or statement about God which we already have in the Old Testament. The heart of these statements really lies in the incident in Exodus. Moses stood in front of a bush, saw it burn and yet it was not burned up. Moses asks, who are you, and out of the bush comes the voice of God. The Hebrew is really untranslatable. The best we can do is **I AM WHO I AM.**

So God is the one who says I am, and Jesus is aligning himself with God every time he declares about himself, I am...

Jesus declares his identity as the messiah, the Christ, the anointed one.

John 1:40-45.

40Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

43The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

44Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Some things we need to know.

The Jews were looking for and waiting for the messiah. Their profile of the messiah was that of a military leader who would restore their homeland, throw the Romans out. He would come out of the line of David to rule.

So Messiah and Christ, same truth = the anointed one.

Two other dialogues expand this great affirmation.

Setting the stage, John 4, comes at the end of a long dialogue about meeting a Samaritan woman. Jesus meets her at the well, deep discussion about all kinds of things including the fact that she has had 5 husbands and is now living with another man. We tend to think that is a new idea!

John 4:25

25The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

26Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Jesus is saying, you are waiting for the Messiah, that's me!

Then a dialogue with Peter.

Matthew 16

13When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Peter still has a long way to go but this confession is critical, a turning point.

The word **MESSIAH** is packed with meaning, and we will get into it as we understand that there were 3 groups of people who were anointed as part of their calling.

1. The prophet

He was anointed by both the Word of God and also the Spirit of God. Elijah is instructed to anoint Elisha as a prophet in his place.

2. The priest

In Exodus, God commanded that the priests should be anointed as a sign of their office, anointing oil was to be taken and poured on their heads.

3. The king

When Samuel finds young David, and he knows that he is the one who is to be chosen as the king, Samuel is told by God to anoint him.

The prophet is the one who speaks for God. The priest is the one who leads people to God, and the king is to be the one who leads for God. All these names are woven together into the person of Christ. As the messiah, God's anointed one, he is prophet, priest and king.

Since our minds can usually only handle one idea at a time, we will try to get to know Jesus through these 3 different pictures of one who is anointed.

AS GOD'S ANOINTED PROPHET, CHRIST HAS COME TO SPEAK FOR GOD.

The authority of the prophet lies in one line, and the word of the Lord came to me and said, that is either arrogance or authority. It is the task of the prophet to speak for God into the times and culture in which he lived and lives. He is to listen to the voice of God, and also the need of the time, and at the anointed time, to speak for God.

One day, listen to what Jesus did.

6He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. 17The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners

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and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Then he sat down, I think you could have heard a pin drop.

He spoke with the authority that does not come from information. It comes from the spirit of God.

Jesus at the end of the sermon on the mount, it says that the people were amazed at his teaching because it says he spoke to them as one who had authority not like the teachers of the law. The words Jesus read from Isaiah were going to come to pass. He would bring sight to the blind, freedom to the prisoners, release the oppressed. This is what the anointed one would do.

The prophet brings at least 5 things in his word.

1. A WORD OF REVELATION

The prophet does not reveal the future as though looking into a crystal ball. He speaks into the present. He speaks into the social, economic events of the day and says, this is what is really going on.

Our problem is we read the bible as though the newspaper did not exist and we read the newspaper as though the Bible did not exist.

This is what Jesus was able to do with authority. The church today needs to speak a fresh word of revelation to our times.

2. A WORD OF REBUKE

There were times that Jesus rebuked people as did the prophets in the OT. They were not afraid to speak into their times.

Several years ago, TV program about hearing into the recent economic downturn, CEO of Lehmanns, centre of mortgage mess in the US, committee was analyzing what had happened. We needed to hear the voice of a prophet saying, it was driven by greed.

3. A WORD OF REPENTANCE

Repent = to rethink the way we have been living and to set a new direction.

4. A WORD OF REASSURANCE

Part of the ministry of the prophet is to remind people that God has not abandoned them. God is still with them. The people of Haiti have needed to know this.

5. A WORD OF RESTORATION

This is the word that rebuilds and renews.

Christ the Messiah came to speak for God and he has left the church to be a messianic community, that means an anointed community to speak for God in the world and in the city. We usually use the phrase, messianic community, to describe a Christian congregation that has a Jewish background. Nothing wrong with that. But a messianic community is one that is anointed by spirit to speak for God in our times.

Prophet, now we move on to priest.

AS GOD'S ANOINTED PRIEST, CHRIST CAME TO HEAL.

Each year the high priest went before God once a year on the day of atonement, Yom Kippur, and sought healing and forgiveness for the sins of the nation. Without this, the sins would accumulate one year after another, and there is no equivalent for declaring bankruptcy in the spiritual life.

So this sets the stage for Christ the anointed one, who comes to be the high priest for the sins of the world.

Hebrews 4

14Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. 16Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

So one dimension of the ministry of the Messiah is to bring the healing ointment of forgiveness. It may not take away the sickness, but it will release its sting. The cross is the place to bring our sins of self-pity, our bitterness and the pain of addictive lifestyles.

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I wonder about a growing trend in our society, want to share this with a careful spirit.

Let me affirm. There is a genuine need for counseling. Do not doubt that.

Yet I wonder, have we almost entirely replaced the healing ministry of the Messiah with counseling and therapy? So that every time we face a hurt or a disappointment in life, the last person we turn to is Christ the healer?

A paradox today is that more and more pastors seem to take courses and training in counseling and therapy, while more humanists take courses in all kinds of spirituality to discover some spiritual dimension to their work.

Counseling, identifying personal weakness, or some struggle in a relationship, may expose anger, hurt, bitterness, unresolved anger. But if we do not bring these things to Christ the healer, what can any amount of counseling do to them? Perhaps little, so people end up in a treadmill of irresolvable pain.

For example, let's say that counseling reveals that one of both parties in a marriage need to be less selfish, need to be more loving, seek some forgiveness. That is great, but where do we go with that?

It requires more than technique, or some behavior modification. This requires a radical change in perspective. Repentance over some selfish behavior. It needs sacrificial love to be modeled. This goes beyond the work of counseling. This is now a spiritual issue. This calls for nothing less than a change of heart. This is the work of Christ the priest. Therapy is not a substitute for repentance.

No amount of counseling is a substitute for personal holiness.

Somewhere along this road we need to stop the process of personal introspection that can lead to the dead-end of self-pity, and we bring our broken and hurt lives to the healing ministry of Christ the anointed priest.

We bring our heavy load and we say to him, this is getting too heavy for me, can you help me?

When we do that, we have come to a personal Yom Kippur, a day at atonement for our own lives.

This is the where the ministry of Christ the priest come to us.

We need a place to leave our hurts, confess our addictions, dump our bitterness, bring our self-pity which really is sin, and that place is the foot of the cross.

We need a person to whom we can go and pour out our heart, confess the darkness within us, admit our selfishness, and that person is Christ the anointed Messiah.

I want to emphasize I am not speaking against counseling, that may be very necessary and helpful in our lives. But it is only part of the journey. Without a spiritual place to take what it may reveal and expose in us, we have opened up a Pandora's box inside us and we have no where to put this inner confusion. We have been made aware of a problem but without a solution.

We need the Messiah as priest who can take the weight of our sin from us, need nothing less than the spiritual work of the spirit in transformation.

Remember the word in Hebrews 4:16: Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

We need mercy to free us from the past, and grace to give us hope for the future. Together they forge a spirit of confidence so that we can live with ourselves. Christ the messiah priest can give us this.

Instead of ashes, be anoints us with the oil of gladness.
instead of mourning he puts on us the garment of praise.

AS GOD'S ANOINTED KING, CHRIST COMES TO RULE.

The Jewish nation was waiting for the coming messiah and they were waiting for him to rule. They wanted him to lead their army and go forth to defeat their enemies. You could almost hear them singing Glory Glory Hallelujah. His truth goes marching on.

But Christ the messiah king will not be drawn into such political games.

John 6

14After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." **15**Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Then before Pilate

36Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

37"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

The point is that Jesus is the king but by a different understanding, an entirely different standard. He will reign and rule in an entirely different way.

Jesus comes to rule with a towel and a basin, not with a sword and shield. He comes to rule hearts when people bow their knee and submit to him. It would not be out of fear. It would be out of love fed by gratitude. Every time we pray the Lord's prayer, your kingdom God, we are inviting Christ to rule.

So every worldly rule from the caesars, the napoleons, the hitlers, the Saddam Husseins, they have all come and gone. Their followers are no more. Their empires are lost and forgotten, but there are those whose foreheads are anointed and touched by the finger of God, and who follow the one who rides a white horse, whose eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.

13He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. **14**The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. **15**Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. **16**On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**

Christ the king has come to reign.

So he is Christ, and that is not a swear word! He is our prophet, one who speaks with authority. He is our priest, one who brings us healing, and he is our king. He comes to reign and rule over us.