



Jesus Is
Part 1 – Jesus is God
Pastor Ted Cunningham

This series is eight parts, *Jesus Is*. You'll see on the screen all the different parts of this that we are going to cover. Jesus is Life, light, alive, greater, king, hope. Then, the Sunday after Easter, we will end with Jesus is Coming Again.

Today, we're talking about Jesus is God. Jesus is not like God, Jesus is God. Why does that matter? Why do we need to know that and why does that matter for our lives, for our worship, and ultimately, for our eternity?

I don't know if anyone in here watches the show *This is Us*. I don't want to give any spoilers. I was trying to figure out why I like that show. I didn't really get into it at first, but I really like this show and I think I know the reason why. One, the family has a lot of problems and that's good because our families have a lot of problems. But what I think I love most about the show is that the dad in the show is painted in a very good light. The dad is honored. There are three siblings, adult children in his show. Then the timeline of the show goes all over the place with all their different seasons of life and all their stages and ages of life. But every time you see Dad in this show, it's a good picture of dad.

This can't be said of all television shows. In sitcoms probably more than any, dad is usually fumbling around, trying to figure out how to take care of a family. Dad is usually portrayed as dumb, let's just be honest. Dad doesn't have it all figured out. I guess that's why I love this show because it's a picture of Dad and it's a picture of what we're all called to do with our parents and that's honor our parents. You see that throughout this whole show. I don't want to give it away for those of you who binge watch shows, but now that mom is going through some stuff, to just watch the kids just rally around her health and how to help her.

As I thought about that this week, I thought some of us really struggle with understanding who Jesus is. I grew up in the church, I was born and raised in the church, but in the church I grew up with, sometimes it was really hard to separate the biblical Jesus from the Baptist Jesus. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? At times, our tradition and the scripture became one. If you've been at this church for any period time, you know that scripture drives the bus. Tradition is good, denominational preferences are okay, but we shouldn't let them drive the bus.

Then I went to college and I got around friends who went to different churches and I heard things coming out of their mouths and I'd be like, "That's not who Jesus is," and they'd ask, "Why not?" I just had this picture of Jesus.

Some of us, when we think about Jesus, we think of a 21st Century American citizen. I was talking with a guy this week. Don't get all worked up with this illustration; we're creating tension right now. That's what you do at the beginning of the sermon and then we'll work through it as we go. He was talking about the candidates that were just debating and he said, "This candidate here is most like Jesus." I went, "Okay..." I just wanted to know why, what is it about them. Obviously, he went into "Because of how he cares for the poor."

He went through all that and I said, "Okay, it's interesting because I can go over here and talk to someone who might ask this question... And I know it's on bracelets and I think it's a good question. It's limiting though because we ask the question "What would Jesus do?" This is obviously in situational ethics where we are presented with something and we don't know what to do in a particular situation. "What would Jesus do?" We obviously know when young people wear those bracelets, they know that if they are going to watch something they shouldn't watch, they answer the question with, "Jesus wouldn't watch this." But we don't know in all situations what Jesus would do.

I've had people tell me Jesus would never walk by someone who was sick or lame or homeless without stopping to meet their needs. I said, "Well, you need to read John 5 in the Pool of Bethesda where he goes out to a crowd of people, heals a guy and then sneaks back into the crowd." We can't make these bold statements about this in every situation.

I had a guy that told me, "If Jesus were here today, he would definitely conceal and carry." No. Your like, "Do you know where you are?" I know, I'm at Bass Pro Community Church; I get where I'm at. But do you see what I mean? You can't make that statement. Your like, "He would! He would be all for the Second Amendment!" Bring it down a notch. We don't put the constitution and the Bible on the same level. I'm getting in trouble right now, I know that, and we're going to half to work though it. You know what I'm talking about here. I know there are about three or four hundred of you carrying right now. I feel very safe at this church. If something goes down, I think we're all gone. Shots are going to be coming from everywhere. I'm just trying to make the point that we can't know in every situation. I'm here to encourage you. You have to hold this lightly.

I'm here to tell you – and this is why we're doing this series – there's a better question. And there's a first question we need to ask before even this one. We get asked all sorts of questions. And you know it if you've been in church for a while. You know people get questions and questions are out there: "Why does God allow evil to exist?" We just dealt with this in our *Promises* series. I get asked this next question often. My son is passionate about apologetics and we talk about this quite a bit. "How old is the earth." Great question. We can discuss this. How about this one. "What is God's will for my life?" "Should I move, or should I stay?" "Should I take this job or not?" "Should I marry this person or not?"

But the question we're asking in this series and going to spend time with and not rush through is this question: "**Who is Jesus?**" This question right here is the first question; it's the most important question. Pastor Timothy Keller says, "*The question you need to answer is, "Who is Jesus?" Because if Jesus is God, and he came to the earth and rose again and ascended into heaven, that changes everything. That is such a critical question that every other question fades to the background.*"

He's not saying the other questions are unimportant and we shouldn't talk about them, but you have to start with the first question. You can ask questions about God and evil and the Bible and science, but those are all secondary questions that aren't even important, relatively speaking, until you ask the primary question: "Who is Jesus?"

The bottom line is this: **We must be right about Jesus.** Today, we want to look at three reasons why we must be right about Jesus, starting with Jesus is God and why that is important. If you have your Bible, turn to Philippians 2. Paul is going to make a clear case for the fact that Jesus is God, not like God, but is God. He is part of the Trinity. We are a trinitarian church, Woodland Hills Family Church. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is not like God, he is God and why that matters. We're going to read, we're going to pray, and then we will jump into it.

Philippians 2 - **5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name... And all God's people said... Amen. ...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 word *confess* means to agree with. ...that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Father, today as we look at Jesus being God, that he's fully God and fully man, the example set for us, the theology in this text that we learned, and why this is important, why this truth is important for us to know. May our relationships be different because of this truth. May our worship be more focused because of this truth.

And for those who eternity has not been settled and they've not place faith in Christ, that today would be the day they know their eternity depends on this truth, that they would clearly walk out knowing that. I pray that the Holy Spirit would call them by name and they would place faith in Christ alone.

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus and everyone agreed and said... Amen.

Let's look at why this matters, why we need to know that Jesus is God, not like God but is God. The first thing we'll spend some time with today is **Our Relationships Count on it.** That's where Paul starts with Verse 5. I'm going to give you the verse in another translation. **5 In your relationships with one another...** (NIV) So, the way we get along is rooted in this. You and I learn how to get along, having the same mindset as Christ Jesus. So, let's look at that mindset and Jesus being God and what he did with that and how it affects our relationships.

6 ...who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped... Pause there for just a second because if you read this, "equality with God a thing to be grasped," there are two ways you can read that. One way you can read it is he wasn't equal with God, but it was something he was reaching for, grasping for something. The second way you can read it is he was equal with God, but it wasn't something he was going to hold onto. So how do you know which is right?

Some would say you have to go to the original languages. Well, I love what John Pieper says about this. He says, "Greek will not help you answer that question. And I know the Greek. Context will though." This is why it's important to not rush through a passage. It's why it's not good for us to just read, read, read, fast, fast, fast, but to spend time to allow the Bible to answer questions you and I come up with. So, let the context answer that question for you.

So, let's say it two ways. Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Jesus did not count the first way - He was not equal with God and so he was reaching for it. He was equal with God and he was willing to let it go. The very next sentence, the very next line, the very next verse answers that question for us. Jesus is God. He's fully God. He is part of the trinity because he emptied himself. So it's not something that he didn't have that he was grasping for, he already had it. He emptied himself. We're going to spend a lot of time with that phrase as it applies to us today.

7 ***but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*** This is why when we speak about Christ, we speak about the deity and humanity of Christ. He was fully God, fully man. ***8*** ***And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death...*** Paul adds here not just death for you and me, but the humiliating, excruciating death. ***...even death on a cross.***

Here's what we're learning today. And here's how it applies to our relationships: **Christ emptied himself for me. He emptied himself for you.** If you want relationships that are rooted with you having the mindset of Christ, and you want to know what a high-quality relationship is, what a relationship where the mindset of Christ is running through it is, let's take this idea and just put you and me in it. You empty yourself for me. I empty myself for you. Could you imagine this type of marriage? We have engaged couples in her right now. Many of you are going through Ready to Wed with our leaders down here on the front row. Let me tell you, this is core to a great marriage. This is the foundation of it. You need to find a way to help your soon-to-be spouse win every argument.

My kids make fun of Amy and me because we fight one another over the weirdest things. My kids will say, "If people heard this, they'd be like *what's wrong with the two of them?*" We don't fight over normal stuff. We like to fight over who is going to let the other person win. I encourage you to try it sometime in your marriage today. If you're always picking where you go to eat after church, you say, "No, we're eating where you want to eat." "No, we're eating where you want to eat." And just sit out in the parking lot until you come up with something. It will be circular; you'll never get anywhere, but it's fun because you're emptying yourself. "I don't care where we eat!" Get passionate it. "You pick!" "I'm not picking!"

Yesterday, we got into one of these arguments. There was this video that went out; it was a viral video. I later found out it was fake. Did you know there's fake stuff on the internet? I usually don't fall for it but this one got me good. This lady is on top of a hill. She is strapping into her snowboard. She's going down the mountain with the GoPro camera on a stick in front of her. There is a Grizzly bear chasing behind her and she doesn't know it. Even Beth Moore commented on the video, "I can't believe it!!" So, if Beth Moore is that gullible, I don't feel so bad about going, "I can't believe she's videoing the whole thing!" Somebody said they edited it.

That got me thinking. Yesterday, as we were driving, I told Amy, "If we're ever chased by a bear, I am stopping to fight the bear and you run on to safety." Does anyone else have these scenarios play out where you're constantly setting... I sit in restaurants, facing the door, so that if something goes down... If I'm ever eating in a restaurant where you're eating, you're safe. I have every vantage point; I have it all figured out. I know what to do. I'm going to throw a table up to protect us and I'm taking the guy out. I told Amy, "You run!"

Do you know what she says? "I ain't running."

I go, "Oh, you're running. You're getting out of there. We're going to give our children and our grandchildren one of us."

She says, "Nope, I'm dying with you with the bear."

We were fighting over who is going to take out the bear.

You know that Ronald Regan joke; it's my favorite Ronald Regan joke. Two guys are being chased by a bear. One guy stops and goes to tie his shoe. The other guy goes, "What are you doing? We've gotta go! Do you think you're going to be able to outrun this bear?" The first guy goes, "I don't have to outrun the bear. I just have to outrun you."

I told Amy, "Get to safety."

She goes, "I'm not getting to safety; we're going out together like the couple on The Notebook. We're dying together."

Let me tell you. This is the best marriage, the best relationships. If you want miserable relationships, have two people that are full of themselves. If you want to be miserable in a relationship, don't empty yourself and just be full of yourself all the time. Does anybody know anybody like that? Don't raise your hand.

Here are **five signs you are full of yourself**. Five signs that you're not coming to the relationship emptying yourself. What does emptying yourself mean in that text? It means making yourself with no reputation.

1. A person who is full of himself always insists on being the center of attention. You know annoying people like this. Every time they walk into the room, they take it over. You're trying to share a story. They are bored with your story; you're not wrapping it up fast enough for them. The details aren't intriguing enough to keep their attention. They are hijackers. They hijack your story and they launch into their own. They are very discontented with listening to other people and allowing other people to share.

2. You assert your agenda and achievements into every conversation. I love sharing this because after the first service, somebody told me, “I was three of the five things you shared.” That’s good, that’s self-awareness. We all need this. I want to come to my marriage, I want to come to my parenting, I want to come pastoring this church, I want to be a community member that’s emptying, not being full of.

3. You demand to be heard and understood. I just want to encourage you. Try listening and understanding. Try spending time focusing on the other person.

4. You act out or shut down when others share their opinions. And if you don’t get your way at the end of the day or at the end of that gathering or at the end of that meal...

5. You leave when you don’t get your way. You leave when you don’t get to be the center of attention.

A pastor I was studying this week said this and I think it’s perfect for what we’re talking about with Jesus is God. Pastor Darryl Dash said, *“Adam – the first man – was not God and yet grasped the privileges of being God.”*

Isn’t this the lie that Satan gave to Adam and Even when God said, “Don’t eat of that tree. If you eat of it, you will surely die.”? And then what did Satan say, “If you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, you’ll be illumined.” First, he said, “You won’t die.” So, he’s immediately denying the word of God. He said, “Your eyes will be opened and then you’ll be like God.” That’s what we do. We grasp for our rights, not just grasp for them, we demand them. “I demand my rights as an employee of your workplace.” “You’re going to treat me this way.” “As your wife or your husband, you’re going to...” We’re constantly demanding.

Pastor Darryl Dash goes on to say, *“Jesus was and is God, but didn’t grasp for those privileges, even though they were his. Instead, he laid them aside and became a servant.”*

Your relationships are counting on this. Your relationships are counting on the fact that you and I need to empty ourselves, taking on the mindset of Christ and taking on the form of a servant, but it’s not just our relationships that count on it, our worship flows from this, that Jesus is God.

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him (Jesus) and bestowed on him (Jesus) 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... Remember what confession is? It’s saying I agree with. We just sang and we confessed together as a body of believers. We just went through that Creed song. We confessed what we believe and we say we agree. One day every knee will bow and every tongue will agree ...that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

If I can just encourage you, worship requires you emptying yourself. Please take what I’m about to say from the heart of a pastor who cares for you and loves you. These are those moments that I know will make some of you just tense up, but I’m going to ask that you and the Lord work through this right now.

Many times, when we come to this place for corporate worship and we gather, there are a lot of times we come full of ourselves. We come full of our preferences. I talk to folks all the time who love Woodland Hills, if we would just change this one thing. I just met a couple that, to be honest with you, I don't know why they are still coming, but it's like they don't really like anything going on. I get agenda item after agenda item. "We want this, we want this, we want this..." I'm thinking, *boy, you're coming to our church full of yourself.*

You come to church emptying yourself. You want to come and worship and gather and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Can I encourage you? Before you walk in here each and every week, empty yourself. However long it takes as your driving from Branson west, Kimberling City, as your coming up south on 65, as you're coming down 76 or Shepherd of the Hills, on the blue, the yellow, the red, whatever it is, start emptying yourself.

Pray out loud as a family. Pray individually, "Lord, don't let today and the worship be about me." People say, "I don't like the worship." I love what Francis Chan says, "Don't worry, we're not here to worship you anyway." Do we not come in here time and time again full of ourselves? "I don't like that singer." "That one gets a little screechy for me." "When that guy goes off on the guitar, no..." "The volume is too loud." "The volume is not loud enough." "I wish they would sing this song." "I didn't really like the first song. It wasn't as singable as the second song." That's when you're full of yourself.

And I'm right there with you. I sit down here, and I have a direct line to that booth back there to start texting... Can I tell you one thing I struggle with as a pastor? And this is just pastor confession time. So much about what we do is catering to the consumer mindset in our church culture. Here's the sticking point for me. We cater to the consumer mindset to reach people and then when people come in and act like consumers, I get mad. Does that make any sense to you? It's a struggle. It's something we work through. When people come up to me or anybody on the team with their agendas... I just want to encourage you, empty yourself before you come in here. Why?

You can't be filled by God when your full of yourself. We want to worship together, as a body of believers who are confessing, agreeing with, saying, "That is true; Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Our relationships count on it, our worship flows from it.

Your eternity depends on it. Your eternity depends on what we're talking about today. Your eternity depends on whether or not you believe Jesus is God. Your eternity depends on you knowing and answering the questions: "Who is Jesus?"

In John 17, we read, ***3 "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."*** That's a great prayer from John.

In John 8, we read, ***24 "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins."***

I heard a pastor a few weeks ago on Instagram. He was doing that box thing where you ask questions and then he answers them. Somebody asked him, "Pastor, why do you never talk about abortion in your

sermons?” His answer just made me sigh. He said, “I don’t talk about abortion because there are people in our church who have had an abortion and I don’t want them to feel guilt and shame.”

When I read that, I wanted to add in, *But then you're not talking about it in context of the gospel. For you are a new creation in Christ Jesus.* It was the same time that video came out where the guy didn’t want the woman reclining in the seat on the airplane. He sat there punching the seat the whole time. A big debate started as to whether or not you can recline on an airplane. His point was he couldn’t recline so she shouldn’t be allowed to recline. If that’s true, then the person in front of her can’t recline. And the person in front of that person can’t recline. Nobody can recline, but we’ve all got these buttons.

I thought about that. This is how my mind works. It’s a little warped at times. I’m thinking if we can’t talk about abortion and that life begins in the womb, and if we can’t be passionate about protecting the lives of the unborn, guess what? We can’t talk about anything. We can’t talk about divorce and the value of marriage because there are people in here who have been divorced. We can’t talk about drunkenness because there are people in here who are recovering alcoholics. We can’t talk about adultery because there are people in here who have had affairs. There is nothing that we can talk about then.

But because of the gospel, because Jesus is God and everything we’ve been talking about today, we can talk about anything. Nothing is off limits. Why? It’s because Romans 8 says this, ***1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...*** Your life before Christ, we can talk about it. And when we talk about this, this should bring great joy to you, knowing what you’ve been saved from. The reason we have to talk about this, the reason nothing is off limits, is because there are people in here right now in the middle of it and they need conviction, they need to repent.

I love what Adrian Rogers said. He said, *“We must not identify the Christian faith with any political party.”* We’ve got to be very careful that we separate ourselves from any political party. Here this and let this rest on you. Democrat or republican, we must not settle on. Here’s why. He said, *“We must be able to call out sin in any and every party. We must be able to call it out and call both parties to repent.”* This is what we’re called to. Your eternity depends on this. We can and we must talk about it all. But because Jesus is God, because he died for you, he emptied himself for you, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For those who are not in Christ Jesus, there is condemnation, but if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that he has been raised from the dead, you will be saved. And when you are saved, there is no no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And all God’s people said...

Would you stand and as you're standing and as we prepare to close, I’m going to read Hebrews 1: 1-3.

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Father, today, as we close, I think of the alcoholic, I think of the one contemplating an affair or in an affair, I think of the one who has received news that a child is on the way and they are debating whether to take that life or to keep that life. I think of the one who is contemplating divorce. The list goes on. There are so many in here who are doing life on their own, doing it their own way and we know that leads to destruction. I pray that through the truth today that Jesus is God, that he died for us, that he emptied himself for me, he emptied himself for everyone of us gathered in here today that today would be the day that they place faith alone in Christ alone.

For those who are dealing with guilt and shame over past sin, I pray that they would rest in the fact that now the new life they have in Christ, not a repaired life, but a new life in Christ, today would be a day they walk out knowing there is no condemnation and that they have been forgiven and they are not going to die in their sins. For the one in here that has not placed faith and will die in their sins, I pray that today would be the day of their salvation.

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus and everyone agreed and said... Amen.