

## The Real Jesus

Luke 3:15-22

The Baptism of Our Lord, January 10, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Wouldn't it be nice if everyone that claimed to be Jesus really was Jesus? Wouldn't it be nice if everyone who claimed to speak in the name of the real Jesus actually did? Wouldn't it be nice if everyone who preached Jesus preached the real Jesus?

Yeah, that would be nice, but it does not happen. The Holy Scripture warns against preachers who preach a different Jesus from the one that the Scriptures proclaim.

Who then are these false Jesuses?

One false Jesus is the one who rewards you for reposting a message about him on facebook in exchange for a reward from him. I once saw a facebook post making fun of this notion showing Jesus opening his laptop in the morning with a cup of hot coffee and saying to himself, "I need to see who I am supposed to bless today."

Another false Jesus is the one who cares about whether or not you say Merry Christmas as opposed to Happy Holidays. Like the real Lord Jesus Christ would take the time to care about such trivial matters as this, like saying Merry Christmas is standing up for your faith. If you really want to stand up for Jesus, lead holy lives and don't worry about whether or not the guy at the grocery store says Merry Christmas or Happy Holidays.

There are false Jesuses out there who promise to make you wealthy. They come in various forms and packages. They are found in various books that you can buy online or at Walmart. Depending upon which of these false Jesus' that you run in to, they will demand different things from you in exchange for the wealth that they promise. Some of them may demand giving to a certain ministry online or on TV in exchange for the wealth that they promise. Some of these false Jesuses will demand that you follow certain steps in order to achieve the wealth that they promise. Some of them will demand that you say a certain prayer and say it with a certain amount of fervency before delivering the money that they promise. It depends on the Jesus that you run into. But if you have encountered a Jesus who promises you wealth in exchange for something then you have not found the Jesus who says that you cannot serve two masters, God and money.

There are false Jesuses who say that certain vices considered wrong in the past are now ok. There are false Jesuses who say that homosexuality is ok. There are false Jesuses who say that certain kinds of falsehood are ok. There are false Jesuses who say that certain other kinds of sexual license are ok. There are false Jesuses who say that living together without marriage is ok. There are false Jesuses who say that fornication is ok. There are false Jesuses who say that ambition and pride are ok. There are false Jesuses who say that covetousness is ok. Not only do such Jesuses say such behavior is acceptable, they say encourage such behavior on the basis of God's grace!

Such false Jesuses typically claim that the rules and laws that forbid these things are out of date somehow. They will say that the Jesus in the Scriptures is really the imposter and that they are the true Jesus. They will say that the Jesus in the Scripture is a Jesus who was invented by the Church many years after the real Jesus. They will then claim that the Jesus of the Bible is an invention by Christians several centuries after the real Jesus. And even though we are now thousands of years after the real Jesus, these false Jesuses will claim to be the real Jesus and to tell you how things really are.

There are false Jesuses who do not do miracles. There are false Jesuses who do not raise the dead. There are false Jesuses who married Mary Magdalenes and then have the nerve to claim that the Jesus in the Scriptures is false because He did not marry Mary Magdalene.

There are false Jesuses who did not rise from the dead. If you encounter a Jesus who did not rise from the dead, then you have encountered a false Jesus. There are false Jesuses who were not crucified. Believe it or not there really are Jesuses out there who claim not to have been crucified. Such false Jesuses are incapable of atoning for your sins or saving you from death. They are incapable of being the Creator who has come to redeem all things. Such a false Jesus is unable to raise you from the dead. And you need not fear such a false Jesus because such a false Jesus has no power to judge you in any way whatsoever.

Then there are the more subtle false Jesuses. These are not obvious. They do not go by obvious titles wherein we may spot their falsehood. There are Jesuses who request that you do something in order to earn your salvation. Such Jesuses are false, but they are out there. In fact they abound. Such false Jesuses vary in how much they require from you before they give you your everlasting salvation. Some false Jesuses demand many things and they have lists and lists of things that you must do and observe in order to earn everlasting life from them. Other false Jesuses demand only a couple of things. Do those couple things and you are in.

Some false Jesuses demand only one thing from you in order to be saved. Such Jesuses sound like the real Jesus because the real Jesus saves us by grace, but still wants us to be good, so when a false Jesus demands only one thing to be saved it sounds like we are saved by grace, but really we are not. Any Jesus that demands anything from you in order to be saved, even if it is only one thing, is a false Jesus. And often the one thing that these false Jesuses demand is something that we cannot do.

Some false Jesuses demand our complete loyalty, as if we could give that to anyone. Some false Jesuses demand that you make a commitment to them above all other things, like we could do that. Some false Jesuses require that we love them above all things or perhaps our neighbor as ourselves, like we could do that.

These false Jesuses claim to have been crucified for our salvation, not that their crucifixion did us any good because they are still demanding something from us. These false Jesuses claim to have done miracles. They claim to have risen from the dead and yet their love is conditional. They will not come and dwell with us unless we do their thing first.

Then there is that rare false Jesus that does not demand anything, but will not tell you anything either. There is a false Jesus who claims that he was crucified for our salvation. He claims that he rose from the dead. He claims that he is our savior, but then he refuses to tell us anything about our salvation. He refuses to tell us whether or not we specifically are forgiven. He refuses to make known who is saved and who is damned. He leaves it to us to speculate over it. He leaves us to wonder whether or not his crucifixion and resurrection apply to us or to other people. He says that people are saved by grace, but then refuses to tell us whether or not we are saved by grace.

These are the false Jesuses. Avoid them. Avoid their preachers. As you value your salvation avoid the false Christs. Don't you know that Satan himself comes to you masquerading as an angel of light? Do you not think that his servants will also come to you with righteous lives, at least with lives that look righteous? They will sound holy. They will sound intellectual. They will sound true. They will sound kind. But they are false. Beware of them and avoid them as you value your salvation.

Do not say to yourself, "Well, they have most everything right?" and then think that they are ok because they have the important stuff right. That is like saying of a man whose arm was amputated, "Well, at least he is still alive." His arm is amputated!

So what can be said of the real Jesus? How will we recognize Him? It is little wonder that people wondered whether or not John the Baptist might be the Christ. John rebuked King Herod for his sins. He had nerve. He was preparing the way of the Lord and making His paths straight. He preached repentance and righteousness. He baptized and forgave sins. It would be no big surprise at all if he were the Christ. But since John is a preacher of righteousness, he makes sure that we know that he is not the Christ. In fact precisely because John is a preacher of righteousness, he makes sure that you know that Jesus is so far above John that John is not worthy to stoop down and loosen Jesus' sandal strap. John is merely one who baptizes with water. The real Jesus is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

I suppose you could come to the conclusion that the fire with which Jesus baptizes people is the fire that the apostles received on the Day of Pentecost. You could come to that conclusion and it is not wrong, but thus far in Luke's Gospel fire has referred to judgment and damnation. The real Jesus therefore baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with judgment. After all, His winnowing fork is in His hand. He is clearing His threshing floor. He will gather the wheat into the barn and the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire. The real Jesus is a judge. When you stand before Him you are standing before the judge of all the earth. The real Jesus is the one who saves some and others He casts into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The real Jesus is the one who decides heaven and hell and He reveals to you which place you are going.

The real Jesus is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. He does not simply give out water. He gives out the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit and His gifts are the sign of the end of the age. They are the sign of the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is given only by the King of the all the ages who establishes His everlasting Kingdom.

The Holy Spirit is the One who gives life. He was in the beginning hovering over the waters out which the Lord brought the creation. He is the One who breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life. The Holy Spirit is the One who through the ages has continued to breathe life into those who were dead. The vocation of the Holy Spirit is to give this life and create faith in Jesus. It is this Holy Spirit that the real Jesus will give to you. If you have met a Jesus that does not give out and baptize with the Holy Spirit then you have met a false Jesus. The real Jesus will not withhold the Holy Spirit from you.

In order to give you this Holy Spirit, God the Father first gives the Holy Spirit to Jesus. Once Jesus is baptized God the Father has announced to all that Jesus is His beloved Son. He is the real Jesus. Because Jesus is God's beloved Son and because God is well pleased with Him, Jesus is now destined to be crucified and to rise again from the dead. Such crucifixion and resurrection stand fulfilled and thus Jesus is the One who has baptized you with the Holy Spirit.

He is the real Jesus.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.