

This is week three on our Advent series, 'Carols'. On the first week we looked at the carol, 'O holy night', and thought of the lines, 'a thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices. For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn'. We recognised that one day with Jesus can change everything.

Last week we looked at the carol O Come All Ye Faithful, and we learnt that Jesus helps us become more faithful, joyful and triumphant.

Today we're going to look at some truth from a classic carol, Away in a Manger. Let me give you just a little context. There's a lot of controversy around who wrote the lyrics to this song. A lot of people think that it was Martin Luther, the father of the Great Reformation; but after more study, most people say that he didn't actually write it. And so, there's mystery as to who wrote the lyrics of this song. This song was first published with two stanzas in Little Children's Book for Schools and Families, a Sunday school collection published in 1885 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America. So, it is much more likely that it is an American song to which the third verse was added by an unknown author sometime after it was first published. It is perhaps one of the more sentimental carols.

There's a phrase that's used in it over and over again that I want to focus on. And my hope is that years from now as you hear this song God will bring to your memory what we've experienced today, and would jolt you back into a place of alignment with His Spirit. And the phrase I want to focus on is, 'The little Lord Jesus'. I googled the phrase and these pictures are what came up. The little Lord Jesus. Unfortunately, in some ways, focusing on just the Baby Jesus may be a little disservice to us. Jesus isn't just the dear six pound, eight ounce Baby Jesus, there's so much more to what God intended. And so, rather than focusing on the size of the Baby, what I want to do is focus on the Lordship of Christ. So the key thought of this message is that:

Jesus is Lord.

In fact, 740 times in the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as Lord, 740 times. In fact, I want to look at one of the classic Christmas verses, one of the most quoted verses from Luke's Gospel dealing with the birth of Christ and show you the very first mention of the Saviour's birth, we see Him called Lord.

In our reading: The shepherds were watching the flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared and said:

*...Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord.* Luke 2:10-11

At the very beginning of the story it's established that Jesus the Son of God is born, He is the Saviour of the world. He is Christ the Lord.

The big question that I want to deal with today is, what does that mean for us? If Jesus is Lord, what does that mean in everyday life? If we're married, what does it mean in our marriage? If it's coming to exam time, what does it mean for our study? If we're buying Christmas presents, what does it mean, Jesus is Lord, while we're buying Christmas presents? What does it mean to make Jesus your Lord?

The Greek word that is the word translated as Lord is the word Kurios. And this word can mean supreme in authority, it means controller, it means Lord.

Now I can already imagine, for some of you the word controller is going to be a challenge because if Jesus is the Controller, he's got some competition in you, because you want to be in control. How do I know that? Because I want to be in control of my life – make my own decisions, prepare my own plans, do my own thing. It's part of being human and I suspect that you all understand what I mean – you want to be in control.

Well, what does it mean if Jesus is supreme in authority, Jesus is the Controller, Jesus is Lord? What does it mean to make Jesus the Lord of our life?

If I can be technical for just a moment, and I don't want to make anybody feel bad for using this phrase, but technically we don't make Jesus Lord? God made Him Lord a long time ago. He's already Lord. We don't make Him Lord. What we do is we surrender to what he already is, we surrender our lives to His Lordship. We don't make Him Lord, God made Him Lord. We surrender to His Lordship. What does that mean? Well, we surrender to the supreme in authority. We surrender to the only One who is really in control. We surrender to the Lord.

And so, what I want to do in the rest of our time is talk about surrendering to the Lordship of Christ. How do we do it? And I want to talk about two different levels of surrender. The first is what I would call:

**The partially surrendered life.**

The partially surrendered life. And I'm very afraid that this is where the majority of Western Christians would live. Where we live, there are so many what I would call casual Christians, or cultural Christians. We believe in God, but we live as if He doesn't exist. It's the partially surrendered life. Luke 6:46, Jesus was talking about the wise builders and the foolish builders and speaking of the foolish builders he'd say:

Luke 6:46 *Why do you keep on saying that I am your Lord, when you refuse to do what I say?*

Why are you giving me this lip service? I don't want lip service, I want life service! I don't want you to talk about it, do it. Why is it you're calling me Lord and then you do whatever you want to do?

Unfortunately today, I believe there are so many people who would say, You know, I believe in Jesus as Lord, but I still want to be in control. I believe Jesus is Lord, but I still want to do whatever I want to do. I believe Jesus is Lord, but I'm just not going to trust Him with everything. And so, before long we end up practically, by the way we live, we just take the Bible and say; You know, when it comes to relationships, I know Jesus says I'm supposed to pray for those who hurt me and bless those who persecute me. I know I'm supposed to forgive but, after what they did to me, there's no way I'm going to forgive, just forget that! And we take God's Word and we say, Forget it! And, Oh I know, that when it comes to my money, I'm supposed to trust God and I'm supposed to give ten percent, and then my offerings. Ten percent, that's the stupidest thing ever! There's no way I'm going to ever do that! And Oh, I know when it comes to my time and the way I live, I'm supposed to give God my time, I'll give Him my Sundays, every now and then, but I'm too busy to read and pray every day, and don't ever expect me to go to a homegroup or anything.

Many of us rip up God's truth every day with the way we live or don't live. And Jesus said, Hang on, don't call me Lord and then go and just do whatever you're going to do? Why do you call me 'Lord', and don't do what I say?

It's the partially surrendered life. In fact, I've printed for you in Proverbs 3:5-6, I put this from the PSV. Okay, PSV stands for the Partially Surrendered Version of the Bible. Bear with me with this, this is how this is translated from the PSV:

Trust in the Lord with...

...some of your heart, and lean on...

...your own understanding, in...

...some of your ways, acknowledge him, and you can...

make your own paths straight.

Now, if you're kind of new to church, I just want to say, that's not a real version of the Bible! Okay, just so you'll know, I changed it into the Partially Surrendered Version. That's so often my response.

But here's the deal, what we need to understand, Jesus is no part-time Lord, and He doesn't want part-time followers. When you come to Him, He asks you to give your whole life. He says:

*Luke 9:23 Then Jesus said to all the people: If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross each day and follow me.*

You have to put Jesus first. You come under the Lordship of Christ. He is the supreme in authority. He is the One who says what's right and He is the One who says what's wrong. He is the One who is the Controller, He is the Lord of all, and we come under His Lordship. And it's not this pick and choose, Hey I like this thing, I'm up for that, but that's for the really holy people!

So, here's what I want you to do, I want you to take a moment and be very open to what God might show you and ask these questions very prayerfully, "What have I not surrendered to the Lord?" "What area of my life am I still trying to control?" "What area am I unwilling to give to God?"

It could be your children, your future, your money, your job, your hopes, your past, a relationship, a habit..... What is it? What is it that you've not surrendered to the Lordship of Christ?

What area am I not fully surrendering to God? What am I not fully surrendering to the Lordship of Christ? Because almost all of us, in one way or another, we're living a partially surrendered life. Let's talk about another level of surrender and that's what Jesus wants for us and I'd call it:

### **The fully surrendered life.**

Fully surrendered, all in. Not kind of a Sunday Christian, not kind of a when it's convenient, not a God Bless America, and all this kind of stuff. But a full-on, holding nothing back, my life does not belong to me but belongs to Him commitment.

In fact, I love the way Paul phrased this in Romans 14:7-8, he said:

*7 For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. 8 If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*

Who do we belong to? If you're a Christian, who do you belong to? Scripture says:

...we belong to the Lord.

We belong to Him. Our life is not our own. We surrender to His Lordship, we belong to Him.

Here's the deal, when Jesus shed His blood and died for you, He offered the availability of a free gift to you, salvation. It's by grace that you are saved through faith, it's not by works so that no man can boast, it is the gift of God given to you. Salvation cost you nothing, it cost Jesus everything. But when you say yes to it, you no longer own the rights to your life. Does that make sense? You belong to Him. You surrender to His Lordship. Your life is no longer your own. You are no longer the controller or the Lord of your life, He is. That's why I'm so anxious that I see this kind of casual approach to Jesus in my own life. He's just a six pound, eight ounce Baby Jesus. Jesus is my buddy! He's my friend. That's a very modern way to look at Jesus, and you won't find it in the bible.

Jesus isn't just the little Lord Jesus Baby in a manger. He's not just the Lord Jesus on a cross dying for our sins. What you need to understand is He's the soon returning, conquering, reigning, ruling, supreme in authority coming back with a sword, with a name written on it that He is the King of kings and He is the Lord of lords. And He means business. Don't just say, Lord, Lord, and then do whatever you want. He is supreme, ruling, reigning King of the universe. Our life, if you're a Christian, it doesn't belong to us, it belongs to Him.

So with that said, Proverbs 3:5-6, this is the real version. We're told to trust in whom? Let's just say we're told to:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*

The word acknowledge, I'm not a big fan of the way that's translated. In the Hebrew language, the word that's translated acknowledge is the word yada. This

same word is also translated to know. It's the same word that describes the intimate relationship with Adam knowing Eve. I prefer:

...in all your ways know Him and He will make your paths straight.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don't rely on your own intelligence. Know him in all your paths, and he will keep your ways straight.* CEB

Here's the bottom line, the reason so many of us do not surrender some area of our life to the Lordship of Christ is because we don't know Him in that area of our lives. To know Him is to love Him, to know Him is to trust Him. To know Him is to surrender to Him because when you know Him you know He is Ever-Present, He is All-Knowing, He is All-Powerful, He is Good in every way. He is Holy, set apart from us. To know Him is to surrender to Him because He is the Reigning, Ruling King of the universe. And not only is He incredibly powerful, but He is a relational God who came to us in the name of Emmanuel, to be God with us because He wanted to reveal Himself to us. That's why He sent Jesus, so we can see Him, so we can know Him, so we can relate to Him, so we could have a love-relationship with Him. It's all about relationship. When someone asked Jesus, 'What's the most important command?' Jesus basically said, 'It's a relational command.' The most important command is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your soul and with all your strength. It's a whole fully-committed life. It's not a partially feel good, I like this and don't like this, but it's out of the love-relationship, it's because I know Him, because I love Him.

The tragedy is, and I don't want to bring fear where there's no need for fear, but in some cases there needs to be some reverent fear. I am afraid there are too many people in our churches and communities who are under the illusion that things are cool because you joined a church years ago, or because you were baptised, or because you ticked a box, or because you say God Bless you when somebody sneezes. And the reality is, there's a lot more to Christianity than that. The gift of eternal life may not cost you anything, but your only reasonable response is to give your whole life, and if you're not giving your whole life, at some point we have to ask ourselves the question, do we really know Him? Jesus said some of the most haunting words in all of Scripture, Matthew 7:21-23, speaking of after this life, He said:

*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we not prophesy in your name, drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ...*

In our world it would be, You know, didn't I go to church every now and then? Didn't I give some money to the guy with the bucket at the supermarket? You know, Didn't I help the lady cross the street? You know, Wasn't I good person? Didn't I do all of these good things, Lord, Lord?

Verse 23, Jesus said:

*Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"*

We're not in a relationship. You gave me lip service, but we didn't know each other, there's no intimacy. You called me Lord, but you didn't do what I said.

You see, there's a really big difference between calling Jesus Lord and surrendering to His Lordship. He is Lord. It's not a game. No, He's Lord, and we surrender to the Lordship of Christ. He's not a part-time Lord and He doesn't want part-time followers. He gave us the free gift of eternal life and He wants the only reasonable response – which is take my life. Not my will, but your will be done. Therefore, I will take whatever I'm trying to control and get to know Him and surrender it to His Lordship and trust Him with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding, but in all of my ways I will know Him and He will make my paths straight.