



## Hazelbank Presbyterian Church



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Here is Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Son of Man. This morning I hope we'll see what picture these paint for us of the Jesus we know and interact with. And what hope there is here for us.

<sup>60</sup>Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" <sup>61</sup>But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" <sup>62</sup>"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." <sup>63</sup>The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. <sup>64</sup>"You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

They all condemned him as worthy of death. <sup>65</sup>Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

We are still in the period of Lent, for those of you who are still off your chocolate I am sure you don't need me to remind you! If you are unfamiliar with Lent, it is simply the season that prepares us for Easter – a bit like Advent - the 40 days prior to Christmas we build towards celebrating Jesus' birth, so also Lent builds us towards celebrating Jesus death and resurrection. It is meant to be a time of denial when we can go off something – such as chocolate and when we feel the urge to eat it instead of giving in to that craving we should pray and so prepare ourselves for Easter and what Christ has done for us. It is a bit like the idea of fasting we discussed in the very early chapters of Mark 1 and 2.

So the context of today's passage begins to remind us and to prepare us already for the season of Easter. I encourage you to set aside time in the coming weeks to prepare yourself for the Easter season. We will be using the time we have left before Easter finishing off our studies in Mark as it climaxes at the end of chapter 16 with the victorious Easter account of the resurrection. This sermon is particularly for you if you need the person of Jesus who represents power. From time to time in life we need to hold hands with Jesus who can change things, to whom we can trust our family, to whom "all authority has been given to in heaven and on earth." And that is the Jesus I see in this passage. We know from our earlier studies in Mark that the Jewish leadership had long been looking to put Jesus to death. Quite simply, He upset the apple-cart. He disturbed things. He called for change, radical change, and condemned much that was wrong in the hearts and actions of the people. And this upset the leaders to such an extent that they were looking to kill him.

This morning's account tells of a trial. Jesus is brought before all the Jewish leaders and rulers, witnesses are brought against Him, all in an attempt to prove that Jesus deserved to die. This is Jesus' Jewish trial, it is the first trial; because the Romans had occupied Palestine Jesus also had to have a trial by the Roman Governor Pilate. The Jewish leaders did not have the authority to carry out death sentences, so after they had decided someone should be put to death for breaking Jewish laws, they had to make a case to the

Roman government before being able to carry out the sentence. So in this first trial, the concern of Jewish leaders was to find evidence that Jesus had committed a crime worthy of death.

We read this morning that of failed attempts to produce witnesses against Him, and then we come to the climax of the story. The High Priest takes over, and questions Jesus. Maybe he can get Jesus to incriminate Himself. The first question is unsuccessful, Jesus remains silent. But then the High Priest asks Him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” Matthew’s gospel records it this way:

<sup>63</sup>But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Now Jesus was under oath – beforehand he was not really obliged to say anything, but now he is. And under oath Jesus tells them what they didn’t want to hear in one sense but what they needed to hear to condemn him. Now during our walk through Mark’s gospel we considered the Messiah, God’s anointed one, the promised Saviour of Israel but here is a different term for Jesus: Son of God. You may have heard opponents to Christianity say that Jesus never claimed to be God, that calling Him by the title “Son of God” is something that Jesus’ followers made up after His death. This is really false. Here is one very plain example. True, the question is not “Are you the Son of God,” it is “Are you the Son of the Blessed One?” although Matthew does record it as “God”. Why the different words? Well the Jewish leaders almost never used the name of God for fear of “taking it in vain,” and thus breaking that commandment. So they used lots of other terms for God, sometimes calling God “the Lord,” sometimes calling Him “the Name,” and sometimes using the term “Blessed One.” There is no doubt that is what Caiaphas is doing here. He is asking, as plainly as he can, if Jesus is claiming to be the Son of God. We read Jesus reply in verse 62:

“I am.”

Matthew writing to a Jewish audience records it as “God” so that the Jews reading this message might know that this was exactly what was being asked and there was no playing around with words or titles. So it is clear. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God.

He claimed to be divine, to have the ability to forgive sins and to heal and to command the forces of nature. And He proved it.

So, what does this confession mean for you and me? It means that Jesus was not just a good moral teacher. He wasn’t merely a good example, or a wise man, or a confrontational prophet, or an ordinary priest. He was, and is, the one and only Son of God. He demonstrated this most fully by rising from the dead – by defeating the power of death once for all – by being crucified yet by emerging from the grave victoriously. This is the most unique teaching of Christianity in comparison to other religions of the world – the One we follow still lives. Mohammed is dead, Confucius is dead, Joseph Smith is dead. Jesus is alive, and reigns forever as the Eternal Son of God. It means that we don’t look at a static picture. We don’t read a history book. We walk with our Living Saviour. We talk with Him, we listen to Him, we obey Him. He is alive, He is in charge, and He is powerful.

I think that one of our biggest problems with this passage is that as we read it we are tempted to see a different Jesus. A Jesus that is not accurate. Here he is after begging

God for a way out, after sweating blood in a moment of trauma, after being arrested, after all his followers deserting him... Here he is at the mercy of the authorities and on a one way track to his execution and he seems... different. We are tempted to believe that this Jesus that we read of today is at his wits end, he has played all his cards, he is on his own, weak and vulnerable and helpless. A pitiful Jesus, stripped of his royalty and power, nothing left to offer and all but hopeless.... Now if this is the Jesus you are tempted to see in this reading I want to tell you that you are wrong. So wrong, nothing could be further from the truth.

Where do you need the touch of the powerful Son of God? The one who would look the entire Jewish leadership in the face and declare boldly, "I am the Son of God!" He is here. Jesus longs to come in power. All we need to do is let Him. I know how hard that is. It is hard because we are stubborn people who like to feel as though we are the ones in control of our own lives. We are the ones who call the shots... But it means letting go, putting Him in charge, trusting Him. It means making Him Lord instead of us trying to control everything, trying to manage it all on our own thank-you-very-much. It means letting Him be God. It means letting Him do things His way, a way we might not expect or might not find comfortable. He might ask us to give something up. He might ask us to change. He might simply ask us to trust. Will we? Will we let Him come in power? You know the problem with the Jewish leaders is that they refused to recognize God among them. He did all the miracles, He healed and taught and corrected. And yet Jesus didn't fit their mould. He didn't meet their expectations. In fact, He challenged their expectations. Yet they refused to see God at work among them. They refused to believe, they refused to recognize the presence of the Son of God. There was God in their midst, but since He didn't fit in their box they rejected Him. We dare not do the same thing. We dare not try to keep the powerful Son of God in a box of our own construction. We dare not say "He couldn't do that, well, I mean I guess He could but He wouldn't..." Would He? I believe Jesus wants to be the Son of God in power in our lives. I believe He longs, He offers, He desires to come even now. To bring power, to change us. Will we let Him or will we resist Him?

But there is a second term for Jesus used here: Son of Man. There is more to the picture of a God of power. In Jesus' answer to the High Priest, He first claims the title "Son of God," and then uses a second title:

<sup>62</sup>"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

This second title, Son of Man, is Jesus' preferred title for Himself. In the Gospels we find it used almost 80 times. This is a title that has always sparked great debate and reminds me of the essays we had to write on it in College - where it comes from, what it means, why Jesus uses it. But what is clear to me is that it is also a title of power. That is clear to me from how Jesus uses it here. He quotes from the book of Daniel, 7:13(-14):

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

Do you see the picture of power?

He is given “authority,” “sovereign power,” everyone bows and worships; He is king of a kingdom that cannot fail.

We read the reaction of the Jewish leaders to Jesus’ claims. The High Priest tears his robes, declares Jesus a blasphemer, and sentences Him to death. And then, in an amazing picture, they get violent. This group of prestigious men, proud, aloof, self-important, start to spit. They punch Jesus with their own fists. And they mock Him. For Jesus to claim to be the God of Power, Son of God and Son of Man, was too much for them to bear and so they go so far as to get physical in their rejection of Him. This is where I see it all coming down to for us. Jesus made some strong claims – He claimed to be Son of God and Son of Man, He claimed to be The God of Power. The Jewish leaders rejected that claim and crucified Him for saying it. Now the question is how will you and I respond to these claims. I see three options: to reject the claims as did the Jewish leaders; to accept the claims, or to try and ignore them. I doubt many of you would be here if you completely rejected Jesus’ claims, but what about the other two? Ignoring the claims: I want to be brutally honest: power in other people’s hands is terrifying. We aren’t generally afraid of power, as long as we are in control or feel we can manipulate it. As long as it meets our expectations, doesn’t get in our way, allows us to feel like we are in control, we can kind of ignore it. I think we are sometimes afraid to let Jesus be the God of Power in our lives because we know it puts Him in control instead of us, it makes Him Lord instead of us being in control every step of the way in our lives. And we worry about what He might do if we really gave Him freedom.

That leaves me the only good option being to accept His claim. That is my message this morning, probably to me first, and then the rest of us. Jesus is the Son of God. He reigns in power. He is in control – of every puff of wind, every chemical reaction, every drop of rain, every moment of time. And His greatest desire is to be fully part of our lives. He desires to reign completely in our lives, to come in power: sometimes power to change, sometimes power to sustain, sometimes in ways we can’t see or understand. Will we let Him?

Watchman Nee a Chinese Christian leader from the last century tells about a new convert who came in deep distress to see him. "No matter how much I pray, no matter how hard I try, I simply cannot seem to be faithful to my Lord. I think I’m losing my salvation." Nee said, "Do you see this dog here? He is my dog. He is house-trained; he never makes a mess; he is obedient; he is a pure delight to me. Out in the kitchen I have a son, a baby son. He makes a mess, he throws his food around, he fouls his clothes, he is a total mess. But who is going to inherit my kingdom? Not my dog; my son is my heir.

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour then you are Jesus Christ’s heir because it is for you that He died."

That is why we can come.

That is why we can expect God to move in power in our lives.

He has adopted us into His family, made us His children and His heirs.

He wants to be free to move in power among us.

And I believe He wants to do that now.

But you have to let Him...

Let’s pray together about it.