

Jesus the Messiah

1. Intro

- I think if we're honest with ourselves at some point in life we have probably harboured thoughts of greatness
- May not have wanted to be the next Bill Gates or Albert Einstein or Billy Joel ...
 - But you may have held ambitions of having some form of success that would stand you apart from others and where you'd be recognised for your achievements
- Me
 - When a young guy I wanted to be a great rugby player
 - Now, a great preacher
- For you
 - Musician > play at the Opera House / paid to play gigs
 - Business > make enough money to retire early
 - Mother / father / grandparent > others admire your wisdom and children
 - Teacher > remembered fondly by students for shaping their school yrs
- Whatever it is, often there's a deep seated desire to be recognised by others or a longing for influence in your sphere of life

- Nothing wrong with wanting to be excellent at something and use your God given talents for good
 - Part of God's common grace to this world that the work we do can be a real blessing for others and our society

- But problem is ...
 - If you do succeed > achieve greatness > influence
 - Can become proud > arrogant > self-righteous > look down on others
 - Lack humility > ugly > not pleasant
 - Look at some of our actors, singers and sports stars to see this is the case
 - If you don't succeed and have the influence in life you hoped for ... what happens?
 - At the least, it humbles you > not a bad thing
 - But for many can lead to despair, feel like a failure, lose confidence, loss of self-esteem
 - It can crush you

- Is it possible to be have influence in this world without being arrogant
- Is it possible to be humble without being crushed by failure
- Yes it is
- Today ... going to look at John's gospel see how we can have that

2. John's view of himself (19-28)

- Last week looked at 1:1-18 the Apostle John introduced us to Jesus as the Word of God
 - One who has eternally co-existed with God the Father and HS > the creator who gives life >
 - Amazingly he came to earth in the flesh to reveal God and his glory to us
- Aim is 20:31
 - *... these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
- From 1:19 ... John is now starting to lay out the evidence for Jesus being the Christ / Son of God so that you and I will believe
- First of evidence > testimony of John the Baptist
- Confusing! > two John's – John the gospel writer and John the Baptist
- Who was John the Baptist
 - Preacher > very popular
 - Lots of people come out to Jordan river to hear him preach
 - Call ppl to repent and baptise them in Jordan river
 - Preaching about the Messiah / the Christ who was to come
 - Beard > alternative clothing > the original hipster!
- This bothered the Jewish authorities
 - From OT prophets ... Jews were expecting a Messiah figure
 - Expected the Messiah to be a powerful kingly military leader ... like King David
 - Expected him to restore Israel to glory days, kick out the Romans and rule over God's ppl
- JTB comes preaching and teaching that the Messiah is coming ... they were concerned
 - Wanted to know if John was the Messiah
 - But also concerned if the Romans heard talk of the Messiah they would come down heavy on the Jews and them as the rulers

- So they send a delegation from Jerusalem out to the Jordan River to investigate
- And they ask him
 - Are you the Christ? He says "No"
 - Are you Elijah?
 - Elijah OT prophet
 - Malachi 4:5 *"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes."*
 - Ppl were expecting reappearance of Elijah
 - Are you Elijah? No
 - Are you the Prophet?
 - Another OT figure
 - Deuteronomy 18:15 - The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.
 - Are you the prophet to come? No
- These three key figures from OT
 - Some ppl thought these three would be one and the same person
 - Others thought they would all come separately
 - Jews coming to find out who this JTB is
- Starting to get exasperated
 - v22 *"Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"*
 - Come on ... give us something to take back to our bosses ... you can;t just keep saying "no"
- To which John replies
 - *... in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"*
- Now what's this? What does John mean by he is the voice?
 - Not John Farnham > not winner of TV song contest!
- Prophet Isaiah > 700yrs before Jesus
 - Later half of his prophecies 40-66 are full of promises to the exiled people of God that their period of exile will not go on forever
 - Foretold there will be a time of rescue when God will come and lead His people home

- God the Rescuer will come in the form of a triumphant conqueror who is also a suffering servant
- And the coming of this triumphant conqueror would be preceded by someone announcing his coming
 - A voice of one calling the desert to make way for the LORD God himself
- So when John quotes this verse to his interrogators ... he's telling them he is the forerunner to the Messiah ... because the Messiah is coming
 - He's not the Messiah ... he's just the herald
 - Like the voice over guy of a game show ...
 - "Ladies and Gentlemen, pls welcome the star of the show ..."
- In addition, John reveals more about himself in v26-27
 - *"I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. ²⁷ He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."*
- In that culture, removing a person's sandals was a disgusting thing
 - Roads were dirty / dusty > no socks > no running water > feet get grubby and feral
 - So gross that Jews wouldn't even allow a Jewish slave to remove a person's sandals
 - Had to be done by a Gentile slave
- Yet here is John saying ... he's not even worthy to untie the Messiah's sandals
- In other words
 - I am so low and he is so high ... that I am lower than a gentile slave compared to him
 - I'm the lowest of ppl and he is the highest of ppl
- This is amazing humility by JTB isn't it?
 - He's prophet of God > ppl coming from everywhere to hear him preach
 - Huge following > trending on Twitter
 - And yet he says ... I'm just a lowly message boy
- Now what's interesting is what Jesus thinks of JTB
- In Matt 11:9-14 Jesus says to speaks to the crowd about Jesus
 - *Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'* ¹¹

I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist

- Jesus had a much higher view of JTB than he did
 - He saw that JTB was of great significance in plan of God
 - Jesus says of all those born of women ... that's a lot!
 - Of all ppl born in history ... JTB is the greatest of all ppl up until now
 - John humble > completely humble > didn't think highly of himself

- Who was right?
 - Jesus was of course
 - All the gospel writers wrote about JTB
 - Jewish historian – Josephus wrote about JTB
 - JTB still a well known figure today

- Despite his greatness ... John was extremely humble
 - Greatness didn't get to his head
 - Didn't make him proud, self absorbed, self-righteous, look down on others

- Why??
 - Because his greatness wasn't bound up in himself
 - It was bound up in who he came to proclaim (repeat)

3. John's view of Jesus (29-34)

- Let's look at John's view of Jesus

- Three things JTB says about Jesus
- Firstly, In v23 when JTB quotes from Is 40:3 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'
 - Lord = YHWH > covenant name of God from OT
 - John is saying ... the one I'm preparing the way for is God
 - Not just a man > not another prophet > God himself is coming in the flesh
 - This Jesus guys I'm getting you ready for ... it's God with teeth and toe nails > nasal hair and knee caps

- Secondly, in v32-33 JTB says
 - *"I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.*
³³ *I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to*

baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

- Matt, Mark & Luke all record the baptism of Jesus and the HS coming upon him
- It's clear here in John's gospel Jesus' baptism has already happened and John is reflecting back on that event

- What's significant about Jesus baptism is that the HS would come down on Jesus and remain on him
 - Fulfils two key prophecies from Isaiah about the Messiah
 - *Isaiah 42:1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.*
 - *Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.*
- John sees the HS come upon Jesus at his baptism
 - He puts two and two together and realises ... Jesus is the spirit filled Messiah
 - This is the one I have come to proclaim

- Thirdly ... in v29-30 John recognises Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world
- What does that mean?
 - Two key images in John's mind
 - First is from Exodus 12
 - God's people slaves in Egypt under Pharaoh
 - Refusing to release them
 - God sends series of plagues on Pharaoh
 - River to blood, gnats, flies, frogs, hail, locusts
 - Every time, Pharaoh refuses to relent
 - Eventually God sends his angel of death > kill every first born son in every family across the land
 - To protect and save his ppl
 - Prepare Passover Lamb > sacrifice it > daub blood on the door frames of house
 - When angel of death comes, sees the blood of the lamb on the door, he will PASSOVER your house and you will be spare judgment and live
 - Blood of the lamb saved ppl from death

- Second image is from Isaiah 53 >
 - Servant figure that Isaiah has been talking about who would rescue God's ppl
 - However he was going to die like a lamb at a slaughter
 - ⁶ *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
 - ⁵ *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

- HS opens John's eyes to who Jesus is and he gets it!
 - He gets that this Messiah he's come to proclaim ... has come to take away the sins of the world
 - For John who came from a priestly family ... this is huge!
 - In effect he's announcing the
 - end of the temple
 - end of the priesthood
 - end of sacrificial system
 - That's because Jesus the Lamb would replace and supersede all that had stood at the heart of Israel's religion
 - Animals can't take away sin
 - Only God in the flesh can because he can die in our place
 - At the cross he will deal with our sin once and for all
 - There in that moment it will be complete / final / done
 - Which is why Jesus will cry out "It is finished!"

- John's view of Jesus is he is the spirit filled Messiah who's come to die in our place for our sin

4. Our view of Jesus

- What do we take out this
 - We need to have a right view of Jesus

- Some of you may be here today and thinking that Jesus is not really worth taking seriously
- First of all, I'm not even sure if he's real > how can I trust he is real?
- Secondly, even if he is real ... why is he relevant for me

- What we have here is an eye witness testimony about Jesus
 - Not just that he was a real man who walked the earth

- He was there > at the Jordan river, John and many others saw him
- But that he is who he said he is
 - He's the spirit filled Messiah who John saw being anointed with the HS at his baptism
- John's witness gives us confidence that Jesus truly is the spirit filled Messiah who came to rescue us

- Secondly, we need to behold Jesus
 - When JTB saw Jesus coming towards him he said to the crowd
 - Look! The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world
 - Look! = Behold!
 - Take notice > adore > follow > understand > respond to
 - John didn't merely want ppl to observe Jesus
 - He wanted them to behold Jesus
 - Be amazed by him and what he has come to do
 - He's saying ...
 - Here he is, pay attention

- **Illustration – Flood Emergency**
 - Recent flooding up north
 - SES warned residents of rising flood waters and the need to prepare to evacuate
 - When the flood waters gets too close send SES to let you know it's time to evacuate
 - So you know ... someone will come and let you know
 - What are you going to do when the SES turns up on your doorstep saying ... danger is coming ... got to get out of here ... head to this place for safety
 - What do you do?
 - Go > foolish to ignore the warning to flee to where you can be safe

- This is John preparing the way, warning ppl and telling them ... this way to safety
 - But not a place ... it's a person
- Listen to John's testimony > pay attention
 - Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

5. Our view of self

- But the other things we take out of this ...
 - The right view of ourselves flows out of our right view of Jesus

- In Matt 11:11 Jesus says this
 - *I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is **least** in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*
- Even though JTB was greater than anyone who ever lived ... even the least in the KOH is greater than him
 - Despite being the greatest person in the history of the world up until that point in time ... even the least of all Christians will be greater than John
- How?
 - JTB was the greatest because he understood Jesus as the Messiah who came to take away the sin of the world better than anyone else at that time
 - But the Christian who lives this side of the cross
 - Who's heard the gospel
 - Heard of God's amazing grace to us in Jesus
 - Heard about Christ's death on the cross in our place
 - Heard about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead
 - They understand with even **greater** clarity and certainty about the one who takes away the sin of the world
- When you come to behold Jesus for who he is
 - When you behold his magnificence, his grace, his power, his forgiveness
 - And the HS opens your eyes so that you get it ... you get Jesus
 - Then you will become greater
 - Not because your greatness is bound up in yourself
 - But because it's bound up in who he who you behold and proclaim (repeat)
- You know what this means ...
 - Is it possible to be have greatness in this world without being arrogant
 - Is it possible to be humble without being crushed by failure
- You see ... look at JTB
 - Despite his popularity, influence and greatness ... John had amazing humility in what he did

- Why was that?
 - Because he had a correct view of himself that flows out of a right view of Jesus
 - He understood he was
 - Just a voice
 - Preparing the way for someone greater
 - As great as John was ... he was extremely humble
 - He understood there is someone far greater than he ...so great is the divide he is unworthy to untie his sandals

- You may achieve greatness in life
 - You may have influence and success
- But you want to know the way to remain humble in all that
 - Like John, you need to have a correct view of yourself
 - No matter how great you are
 - You know there's one who is greater than you ... one who's laces you are unworthy to untie
 - No matter how much influence and success you achieve you're still a sinner who needs forgiveness and to be saved by grace
- A right view of yourself will flow out of a right view of Jesus

- That right understanding of self will keep you humble ... no matter how great you are in this world
 - Example > Mike Baird
 - Premier of NSW > Head of Corp Banking HSBC > Christian man > see him on TV > very humble
 - Why?
 - Because he beholds the Messiah who came to take away his sins, and the sins of the world and he understands who he is in relation to Christ
 - He has a right view of self before Jesus

- No matter
 - how weak you feel
 - how much of a failure you think you are
 - how much your confidence has been knocked around ...
 - when you behold the lamb of God who takes away your sins ... you know in him you are great
 - When life doesn't go as planned it won't crush you ... because you know who you are before Christ

- With a right understanding about self ... you too can become a voice
 - Not win 'the Voice'
 - BE a voice ... a voice for Christ ...
 - That greatness that's been given to you in Christ ... can then flow through you into the world
 - Because the gospel of God's amazing grace to us is a power that is able to transform lives
 - And it doesn't matter how weak or how strong you are ...
 - As you point away from yourself and point people to Jesus ... you can transform the world

PRAY