



# COME & SEE

## WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

**Sunday 19 March 2023**

*SERMON TRANSCRIPT*

Baptism and testimony is not a side element of today. We can do many good things as a church, but at our core, this is celebrating what we are about – disciples, making and maturing and mobilising people to follow in the way of Jesus. Our testimonies echo the words of Peter in John 6:68-69: "*Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."*

Today the woman caught in the act of adultery was going to be my text from the first part of John chapter 8, but last night I felt like the Spirit was saying to hold that for another time and just celebrate baptisms and talk about belief. John chapter 8 is a lot like John chapter 6 – a long, tense conversation around who Jesus really is. The chapter starts with people picking up stones to judge a woman, and it ends with people picking up stones to kill Jesus. Outrage at the culmination of an explosive day of ministry.

The atmosphere in the temple courts is so tense; people can't work out Jesus. His words are clear but not clear; they are compelling and offensive; they have weight and authority but also sound over the top and too hard to swallow.

I reckon that's the same battle people feel today. Jesus is magnetic; His teaching has literally shaped world history. He seems altogether approachable and kind to all the people who seem to need it the most, and equally tough on those people our culture still loves to hate: the religious types. It seems like some hear His words and believe, and others hear them and are totally closed.

Paul says to the Corinthians that, "*For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. Jesus and his gospel creates a crisis point of belief and not everyone will come...*" (2 Corinthians 4:15-16)

But 'belief' lies at the core of John's gospel. Do you know what one word John uses more than double all the other gospels put together and represents one-third of all uses of this word in the New Testament? "Believe!" John 20:31 sums up his purpose for writing: "*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*"

The two verses that most sum up the tone of this chapter is verse 25: "*Who are you?*" they asked. And they ask a similar thing in verse 53: "*Who do you think you are?*"

I suspect that for all those who are being baptised today, they have faced these same questions on the way. Maybe the journey to those answers was simple, or maybe long and complicated. The second question, "Who do you think you are," is critical in answering the first question: "Who are you?"

So who does Jesus think He is? Just in this chapter, Jesus is going to say:

- (John 8:12) "**I am the light of the world.** Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
- (John 8:23-24) But he continued, "You are from below; **I am from above.** You are of this world; **I am not of this world.** 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."
- (John 8:28-29) So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that **I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.** The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."
- (John 8:31-32) "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- (John 8:51) "Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death."
- (John 8:54-56) "**My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.** Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."
- (John 8:58) "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, **I am!**"

I AM! In Exodus 3:14, Moses asks God, "What's your name?" God says to Moses, "I am who I am. Before Abraham was born, **I AM.**" God said this to Moses hundreds of years after Abraham, father Abraham, the father of the covenant nation, the nation of Israel.

This is the clearest claim of Jesus of His divinity, and that's why they pick up stones because He is claiming to be God, and stoning is the punishment for blasphemy.

William Lane Craig, a Christian apologist, and Ben Shapiro, a razor-sharp mind and devout Jew, have a great podcast conversation together. Shapiro wants to acknowledge Jesus as a prophet and a great teacher. For many today, Jesus is a guru, a guide, or just a nice guy. But as Lane Craig points out, Jesus never gives people that option in His own testimony. "Who do you think you are, Jesus?" When you collate all 'Jesus statements' in this chapter alone (let alone the whole gospel of John), it's really hard not to conclude Jesus believed He was the eternal Son of God, the light of the world, the way to freedom!

Which leaves us with the question they first asked: "Who are you?" Some called Him a Samaritan (which was a racial slur) and then of being demon-possessed; and some are left wanting to pick up stones to throw at Jesus. And some - it sounds like a very small number - believed. Who do you say Jesus is? The answer to this question is the most important answer we can discover in life...

Who are you? The baptisms today reflect lives who have asked that question and believe: "Jesus, You are who You say You are." They believe Jesus is Lord and Saviour and Friend. Friends, everyone is putting their trust in something or someone... Put your trust in Jesus - believe in Him.