

McCabe United Methodist Church

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The Big 3 – Question 1: Why Do We Need Christ?

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Good Morning Church!

We gather under the power of the Living, Risen Christ. This same power that rose from Jesus from the dead is here among us this morning.

Over the next couple weeks we'll be wrestling with some questions from Hamilton. These questions are important to the vitality of the church. If we can't answer these questions, the church is more likely to flounder.

The questions:

- 1) Why do we need Christ?
- 2) Why do we need the church?
- 3) Why do we need this church – McCabe?

We might add a 4th question to this series, so maybe it's the Big 3 + 1. The fourth question is: Who's church is it?

Let's pray:

Holy and Mighty God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations on each of our hearts be acceptable in your sight. You're our Rock and you're our Redeemer. Amen.

Why do we need Christ? How do you answer this question?

Erik Segalini wrote: You know, I didn't think I needed anything. I'm an independent guy. I'm a self-made man. I need to take personal responsibility for everything I do and everything that happens to me.

And then, I try to understand and live my faith. Christianity tells me I need a Savior, but what do I need saving from?

He continues, if we're honest with ourselves, we can find ourselves being like two different people at the same time.

On the outside, person number one, we can be happy and ready to go, and then person number two, on the inside, we can feel all dark and insecure and messed up.

We can have a nice smile, then turn around and snap at our wife.

We can be all friendly, then pass judgment like it's going out of style.

We can get approached by a person without a home, and be too preoccupied to give them the time of day.

We can approach things with a me first, not others first perspective.

I can hurt those I love.

I say things I regret.

In our Scripture from Romans, this is what the Apostle Paul was talking about when he wrote:

¹⁷⁻²⁰ ...I know the law but I still can't keep it. The power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions. I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't *do* it. I decide to do good, but I don't *really* do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me. It gets the better of me every time.

Some 2,000 years ago a fellow struggler summed it up saying: I decide to do good, but don't really do it like I should.

Friends, we're human.

We yearn. Deep in our hearts we yearn for healing, for forgiveness, for deliverance, and for acceptance. We yearn for grace, and in a nutshell, that's what a Savior offers.

Someone wrote: Maybe we can think about it like a judge handing down our sentence. We're guilty. It's life in prison. It's a death sentence.

And then the judge pauses... The judge says: while that's the letter of the law, I'm suspending your sentence.

Friends, that's mercy.

Why do we need a Savior? Why do we need Christ?

We need Christ because Christ is the Mediator.

Christ is the Middle Man.

Christ is the healer.

Christ forgives us and heals us and offers us grace.

Through Christ we are restored.

Through Christ we are made whole once again.

Through the greatest act of love ever, through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ on the cross, we are forgiven. We can receive healing. Our relationship with God can be restored and made whole.

This is what Jesus wanted for Zacchaeus...

And this is what Jesus wants for you and me...

Hear how it sounds in our second Scripture today, from Luke 19:

19 Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. ² There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. ³ Zacchaeus tried to get a look at Jesus (He was drawn to Jesus. He knew something was missing in his life. He came to understand that without a relationship with Jesus something was missing. He wanted more), but Zacchaeus was too short to even see over the crowd

Remember Zacchaeus? You may have sung the song when you were little. Zacchaeus was a wee little man, a wee little man was he. He climbed up in a sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see.

⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road for Jesus was going to pass that way ⁵ When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. When Jesus came by, Jesus looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name.

“Zacchaeus!” “Quick, come down! I’m going to your house today...”

(Maybe put your name in here. Jesus coming by calling YOU by name. Zacchaeus! Mark! Jane! Will! Put your name in here). (Jesus saying): Quick! Come down! I’m coming to your house today.

I wonder what the first thing would be that went through my mind. I might wonder, what’s the house look like? Is the house in order?

⁶ Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. ⁷ But the people, they didn’t like it. They were passing judgment.

Our Scripture says: But the people were displeased. “Jesus went to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” the people grumbled.

Remember the way Zacchaeus lived his life. Zacchaeus was living in ways that separated him from God.

Then meeting Jesus, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said: Lord, look into my heart, scrutinize my thoughts, and examine my soul. Your outpouring of mercy and grace is more than I deserve.

Through seeking Jesus...

Through meeting Jesus....

Through growing in relationship with Jesus Zacchaeus said: You’ve change my life. I am a new creation. Now, I can’t help it. I want to reach out to care for others too.

Zacchaeus said: Jesus, I offer you my life. I offer you all that I am and all that I have.

⁸ Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!” ⁹ Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man (Jesus), the Son of Man came **to seek and save those who are lost.**”

Jesus came to seek and to save even people like you and me...

I read recently. We invite Jesus in and we want him to do a little remodeling in our spiritual house, but Jesus doesn't remodel. Jesus is a builder. Jesus wants to come in and do a complete overhaul. Jesus isn't looking to make a few tweaks and a couple cosmetic changes. He longs to make each of us into heavenly and spiritual palaces.

Why do we need Christ?

How we answer this question makes a difference in how we live our lives.

Why do we need Christ?

A relationship with Jesus Christ changes the way we live our lives.

It might be a little different for each of us depending on the difference He makes in our lives.

Over the course of the New Testament we get a variety of pictures of who Jesus is.

In the New Testament, we see that Jesus is:
Savior who laid down his life for the sins of the world.
Jesus is the Healer of our deepest, innermost wounds.
Jesus is the Word made flesh, the Image of the invisible God, the Son of God.
Jesus is the Promised Messiah, the way, the truth, and the life; The Good Shepherd, The Bread of Life, the Resurrected Lord, the Power over sin and death.
Jesus is Rescuer, Friend, Teacher, and Healer/Great Physician. Etc...

Ultimately, Hamilton writes: You can't truly say who Christ is until you're willing to go to the core of human need. We can't really say who Christ is until we're ready to talk about the human condition.

Turn on the news, open the paper, scroll through your news feeds...

Why do we need what Jesus has to offer?

We need Jesus because he can save us from the deepest problems we face, and the deepest problems we face, at the core, are spiritual problems.

We look around. We look inside. We ask what's wrong with us?

Opioid epidemics. Arguing and accosting each other over political ideology. Gambling and pornography addictions. We get lulled by the glitz and the glamour we see on the screen or in the advertising. We judge one another by the color of our skin or the accents with which we speak. A person gets beaten because of his perceived difference in sexual orientation. We pass judgement based on the size of our wallet or the tattoos we sport.

We can create more laws and tougher laws. We can expand the police force and build bigger, more secure prisons.

But what if the answer isn't something we can fix all by ourselves?

What if the real solution is a solution that breaks our hearts of stone?

What if the solution takes hate, and turns it into real, uncompromising, reckless love?

What if the solution offers healing and hope in ways that help us overcome our hurts, habits, and hang-ups?

Friends, could it be fair to say that Jesus Christ is the solution to the deepest longings of the human heart?

Could it be fair to say that Jesus Christ is the answer to the most serious problems that plague our society?

When Jesus is Lord, when the Holy Spirit enters the heart of the believer, we find the empty places begin to be filled. We find that the dark sides of our soul begin to change and transform.

We find that we enter into the process of becoming 'new creatures in Christ.'

For me, when I allowed Jesus to begin to take over my life, I finally started to understand what the Apostle Paul was talking about in Philippians 4:6-7. The Apostle Paul wrote: ⁶Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done. ⁷Then you will experience God's peace, a peace that passes all understanding, a peace that doesn't always seem to make sense. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

So, What about you?

What difference does Jesus Christ make in your life?

It's a foundational question.

It has the potential to be a life-changing question.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ we need you. Thank you for showing us what it means to seek and to save the lost. Thank you for pursuing each of us. Forgive us our sins, heal our wounds, take control of our lives. We offer all that we are and all that we have in service and ministry to you. Save us and use us to help you in whatever way you want. I pray in the powerful name of your Son Jesus, Amen.