Dear friends,

Some job titles that I really like come from the United Kingdom. For instance, here in NZ the person who investigates sudden or suspicious deaths is called a coroner, but in Scotland the title is Procurator Fiscal. And the equivalent of our finance minister in New Zealand, in England, is the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Well, some titles are so well known that they are usually assumed to be names. For instance, have you heard of Mahatma Ghandi? Well, Mahatma is not a name but a title; it is the Sanskrit equivalent of the English ‘Saint.’ But the most common example of a title being confused for a name is Christ. For while Jesus is a name, Christ is a title.

Last week we saw that the name Jesus literally means ‘God saves.’ And we traced the origins of that name way back to Genesis 3 where God promised Eve that one of her descendants would crush the head of the serpent; in other words, save sinners and redeem all of creation from the consequences of sin. So because Jesus was that promised descendant of Eve, an angel instructed Joseph to call Mary’s baby, Jesus, “*because He will save His people from their sins*.”

Well, as the Old Testament unfolds, we learn that the promised descendant of Eve had a Hebrew **title**. And that title was Messiah, which means ‘Anointed one.’ But in New Testament times, the common language of the day was no longer Hebrew but Greek. And the Greek equivalent of Messiah is Christ; anointed one in Greek is ‘Christ.’

* And so, when Jesus called Andrew as His first disciple, John tells us that Andrew went and found his brother, Peter, and because they were Jewish, Andrew said to Peter, “*We have found the Messiah.”* But then John write, in brackets, for his Greek readers, “*(which means Christ).*” So Andrew was telling Peter that this person, Jesus, was the Christ – the anointed one.
* And some time later, there is that well known exchange between Jesus and the disciples, when Jesus asked the disciples, “*Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*” And they replied, “*Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets*.” Then Jesus said to them, “*But who do you say that I am?*” And do you remember Peter’s response? He replied, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*.” And Jesus praised Peter for recognizing this.
* But then we are told that Jesus “*strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ*.”

And that brings us to our text here in Acts 10. For here Peter was preaching a sermon, proclaiming Jesus, the Christ. So what we want to see today is what had changed from when Jesus told the disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ, and the time when Peter preached Jesus, the Christ. And from this we want to see why our deepest need is to know Jesus, the Christ.

So our theme today is **the blessing of knowing Jesus, the Christ**. And our two main headings are the **Biblical Background** of Preaching Jesus as the Christ, and the **Beautiful Blessing** that is Knowing Jesus as the Christ.

1. So we begin with the **biblical background** of ***preaching*** Jesus as the Christ.
   1. And we begin with the **context** of Peter’s sermon. The sermon that Peter preached was preached in the home of a Roman centurion named Cornelius. So Cornelius was not ethnically Jewish; he was a Gentile. But we are told in **verse 2** that he was a “*devout man who feared God with all his household*.” So Cornelius had embraced the Jewish religion; he believed in the God who the Jews worshipped. And as we come to Peter’s sermon, we learn that Cornelius was familiar with the story of Jesus, which was obviously going around Jewish circles at that time. In **verse 37**, Peter says, “*You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea*…” And then he refers to the baptism of Jesus, the healings performed by Jesus, and the death and resurrection of Jesus. So the big question in Cornelius’s household was What did all this mean? And he had been told by an angel to send for Peter who would come and explain what this meant. And now Peter had come and he was preaching.
   2. And the heart of Peter’s message is **verse 36** where he explains the gospel: “*Preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)*.” So, everything that Cornelius and his household had heard about Jesus added up to: Jesus is the Christ; you needed to know and believe that Jesus is the Christ.
      1. And the title, Christ, is explained in **verse 38**, where Peter said, “*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit*.” In Greek it is basically God *Christened Jesus.* So because He was Christened, He is the Christ.
      2. Therefore, says verse 43, “*Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name*.” And by His name is meant Jesus, the Christ – Jesus, the anointed One – His name *and* His title. And we will look at this in our second point.
   3. But before we look some more at the significance of this title, let’s note **what had changed** between when Jesus told the disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ, and Peter preaching this sermon. And I am pretty sure you will know what brought about this change. What two, massive salvation events had happened since Jesus told the disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ and Acts 10? Jesus’ death and resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is because of those two events that the disciples were now to tell everyone that Jesus is the Christ.
      1. You see, even Peter, who had said, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,”* didn’t really understand what that meant when he said it. But now, on the other side of the cross, He did! So now he could be an effective preacher!
         1. It’s a poor illustration but imagine if you volunteered to do some canvassing for a political party in the lead up to the election. So you turn up at party headquarters and you are just told to go out and tell people to **vote for Pedro**. But you don’t really know who Pedro is or what he stands for or what his party’s policies are. So you would be a poor advocate for Pedro, right? But if you met Pedro and you heard him explain why he wanted to be in parliament and what He stood for and what his party’s policies were, and you agreed with it all, well, then you would be a wonderful advocate for Pedro.
      2. And so, because Jesus had done what He came to do, and because the disciples had seen Him as the risen Lord, and because they were now filled with the Holy Spirit, they were ready to be effective advocates for Jesus the Christ.
      3. And it’s the same for you and me, as well. We know that Jesus is the Christ. We know that there is forgiveness of sins only through faith in Him. And we have received the grace of forgiveness and peace. So we too should be eager advocates or ambassadors for Jesus, the Christ.
   4. But as we draw the biblical background of preaching Jesus as the Christ point to a conclusion, we need to think a little more about the significance of Jesus’ **anointing** that Peter referred to in verse 38.
      1. I have said before that you can really summarize the Old Testament as a history of **prophets, priests, and kings**.
         1. **Adam** was the original prophet, priest, and king. He had to tell his wife and their children about God and His commandments – a prophet, and He had to offer worship to the Lord – a priest, and he had to rule over creation – a king. But Adam sinned and failed as a prophet, priest, and king.
         2. So then we get Noah and Abraham and Melchizedek and Moses and Aaron and David and Zadok and Joshua and Elijah and Hezekiah – just some of the Old Testament prophets, priests and kings.
         3. And did all of these men just decide to be prophets or priests or kings and set themselves up in these offices? No they did not. Next week in **Leviticus 8** we will look at the time when Aaron became the first High Priest of Israel. And here is what we read: “*Then Moses took the anointing oil and … he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him*.” And in **1 Samuel 16:13**, we read that “*Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed [David] … And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward*.” So the prophets, priests and kings of the Old Testament were anointed for their office.
         4. And anointing signified three things: **Election, equipping, and commission**.
            1. Election; the anointed person was chosen by God,
            2. Equipping; God would give them all that they needed to fulfil their calling,
            3. Commission; they had the authority of the Lord to do the work He had called them to.
         5. So, because the Promised One of God would be Messiah, the anointed one, we can imagine that the people of Israel, when they saw Aaron or Samuel or David, or any of the other prophets, priests, and kings, anointed to their office, would have wondered if this one was the Anointed One; Messiah?
            1. Again, it is a poor illustration, but if you pay any attention to American presidential politics, you get the sense that voters there view their preferred candidate as **America’s Messiah**; if their guy gets in everything will be fixed but if the other guy gets in, we might as well flee to New Zealand because he will ruin everything.
            2. So you can imagine the renewed hope that the people would have had when a new prophet or priest or king was anointed; maybe he is THE one?
         6. But none of the Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings were the Anointed One. What they did all do, however, was teach God’s people something about Messiah and build up their longing for the *perfect* prophet, priest, and king.
      2. And now, in Jesus, Messiah/Christ had come. And by the Holy Spirit, Peter understood this. He had seen Jesus baptized by John the Baptist. And He saw the Holy Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on Jesus, and He heard the voice from heaven that said, “*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased*.” So Peter said here, “*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit*.” Jesus is the Christ, Lord of all. And what Peter was saying is what our Catechism Question and Answer fills out a little:

*Jesus has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher who perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance; our only high priest who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body, and who continually pleads our cause with the Father; and our eternal king who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us.*

1. So that’s the **biblical background** of preaching Jesus as the Christ; He is the Anointed prophet, priest, and king. So now we can switch our focus to the **Beautiful Blessing** that is ***knowing*** Jesus, as the Christ.
   1. And this is brought out in verses 36 and 43 and what happened after Peter’s sermon. In verse 36, Peter described his message as “*preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)*.” And in verse 43 he said, “*Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name*.” And what happened after Peter preached this sermon? From verse 44, “*While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ*.”
   2. And using what we have just learned about Jesus being the anointed prophet, priest, and king, we can say a little more about what happened that day and what happens with every believer:
      1. So first of all, as our “*chief prophet and teacher, Jesus perfectly reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance.”*
         1. Now, Jesus was not physically present in that room. And I am pretty sure you have never seen Him in this pulpit or any other pulpit. So how does Jesus reveal to us the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance?
         2. Well, listen to the flow of Paul’s argument in **Romans 10**. And I will read it as it is in the Bible but instead of the word “Him” I will insert “Jesus,” who is the Him that Paul is talking about, and I will make Paul’s point as plain as possible: He said, “*For "everyone who calls on the name of [Jesus] will be saved." But how are they to call on [Jesus] who they have not believed in? And how are they to believe in [Jesus] if they never hear Him speak to them? And how are they to hear [Jesus] without someone preaching?*” Do you see the flow? You are saved when you call on Jesus. You call on Jesus when you believe in Jesus. You believe in Jesus when you hear Jesus speak to you. And you hear Jesus speak to you when you hear preaching. And by preaching is meant the faithful explanation of the gospel. So what Paul was saying was that when the Gospel is faithfully preached, Jesus speaks to His people. Isn’t that incredible?
         3. It is why Paul said in **1 Thessalonians 2:13**, “*And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God*.”
         4. So when Cornelius’s household heard Peter preach, they heard Jesus speak to them as their great prophet and teacher. And when you and me read the Bible or hear it faithfully preached, we are hearing Jesus speak to us as our great prophet and teacher. So whenever you hear me encourage you to attend worship services or read your Bible or be part of a regular Bible study, it is only because this is how we hear Jesus speak to us!
      2. But secondly, as our “*only high priest [Jesus] has set us free by the one sacrifice of His body, and … continually pleads our cause with the Father.”* 
         1. We have seen in our Leviticus sermon series that the Old Testament people of God had priests and daily sacrifices to remove their sins. But the Book of Hebrews is clear: The blood of bulls and goats cannot remove sin and the Old Testament High Priests were sinners themselves. But Jesus “*is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them … [He is] holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people … Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people*.”
            1. So those in Cornelius’s house believed that by the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, all their sins were taken away.
            2. Do you believe this? I hope you do! Jesus Christ is the last and best and only priest and sacrifice that we need.
         2. But listen to **Romans 8:34** also: To those who believed in Jesus Christ but were concerned that their daily sins could still condemn them or that the devil could condemn them, Paul said, “*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus … is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us*.”
            1. If you have ever played a card game that involves **trump cards**, you will know that when you play your trump card, it beats anything else. And that is Paul’s comforting argument here: Your sins? Jesus trumps them all! Anything the devil might say? Well, who do you think the Father will prefer to listen to? The whiny devil accusing you or His beloved Son defending you? It will be His beloved Son, every time!
         3. So we benefit from Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and His daily intercession on our behalf.
      3. And also and thirdly, as *our eternal king [Jesus] governs us by His Word and Spirit, and … guards us and keeps us in the freedom He has won for us.*”
         1. From time to time I have seen a **model railway exhibit**. I am sure you have also. There is a large one at MoTaT. And the trains will happily travel around on the tracks, so long as there is a supply of electricity and so long as they don’t wobble and leave the tracks. And that is why the track builder/supervisor is there; he or she controls the supply of electricity and puts any train that has wobbled back on track.
         2. Well, Cornelius and those in his household were in a unique position; they were New Testament Christians when there was not yet a New Testament. Jesus had made it quite plain that the Old Testament *by itself* is not enough, but it would be 50 years or so before the New Testament was completed. So how could Cornelius and his household ‘stay on the right track’? Well, at that moment it was through the preaching and teaching of Peter and the inward work of the Holy Spirit. And we are told that Peter remained for some days, and we can be sure that he helped them establish a church and made arrangements for others to come and preach so that they could continue be governed and guided by the Word and Spirit.
         3. And Christ is at work ‘to keep us on track’ in this same way today; He knows that the ideas and standards of the world will change and usually oppose His will. So He has given us the Bible, as a concrete and reliable and objective standard of truth and knowledge and instruction. And He has given us His Spirit to confirm the truth written in the Bible and so that we can experience the truth of His word, and His presence and power in our lives. And He also saves us into the church so that we can receive the official preaching of the Word and be accountable to other believers.
         4. And as our eternal and sovereign king, He will not let us fall to the devil (ultimately), and he will not let us offer ourselves to the bondage of the world’s ideas and behaviours (ultimately).

Are you encouraged? Are you refreshed? Are you better equipped to go into this week as a servant of Christ? I hope so. For all of this, people of God, is the beautiful blessing of knowing Jesus as the Christ! Amen.