

Scripture:

John 3:1-21

“Why did Jesus come?”

Why did Jesus come?

Well we may say to ourselves that’s an easy one ----- He came to judge.

He came to judge.

At least that’s what He said right ----- after all in John 9:39 Jesus plainly said ----- “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.””

So for some Jesus came to judge --- these are His own words after all --- “For judgement I have come into this world.”

I’m willing to venture a guess that this was not what most of us first thought of when answering the question ---- “Why did Jesus come?”

For judgment...

What about the idea that Jesus came to preach?

After all --- isn’t this what He said too?

“Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else --- to the nearby villages --- so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” ----- Mark 1:38.

To judge and to preach.

What about the idea of Jesus coming to fulfill the Law and the prophets ----- - isn’t that why He came?

And the answer is yes --- and it’s yes because once again He Himself said so.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” ----- Matthew 5:17.

What about to bring a sword ---- didn't Jesus also say that He came to bring a sword --- "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." ----- Matthew 10:34.

And remember this is Jesus in His own words --- plainly and explicitly explaining to people why He came.

In Matthew 10 verse 35 Jesus says that He came --- to turn people against each other ---- "For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—."

I'm pretty sure that these are not the top 5 reasons any of us here today would give as to why Jesus came --- despite the fact that they all come to us directly out of His mouth.

1. for judgment.
2. to preach
3. to fulfill the Law and the Prophets
4. to bring a sword
5. to turn people against one another

Not exactly the most uplifting of reasons now are they.

With the exception of fulfilling the Law and prophets and to preach they are pretty negative --- but of course they only paint part of the picture.

According to Timothy Jesus came to save sinners ----- "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners --- of whom I am the worst." --- 1 Timothy 1:15.

And then in Mark chapter 2 verse 17 according to Jesus Himself ----- He came to call sinners to repentance ----- "On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

And again according to Jesus --- He came to seek and to save the lost --- "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." --- Luke 19 verse 10.

And then there is Matthew 20:28 ----- again Jesus speaking ---- “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

And then Jesus ----- in John 18 verse 37 ---- also said He came to testify to the truth ----- “Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

And in John 6:38 ---- Jesus says --- “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”

And in John 12:46 He says --- “I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”

In John 10:10 He says --- “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

And He also came to die on the cross ---- as He hung from the cross in John 12:27 He said ---- “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.”

And now turning to His followers ----- according to John ----- Jesus came as an atoning sacrifice for our sins ----- “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” ----
-- 1 John 4:10.

And then according to Luke ----- in Acts 3:26 Jesus came to bless us by turning us away from our wicked ways ----- “When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

And then according to Paul ----- Jesus came to redeem and to claim His own in Galatians 4:4-5 ---- “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”

And then according to Paul again ----- Jesus came to be a sin offering in order that we might be made acceptable to God instead of blemished -----
“For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the

flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” ----- Romans 8:3-4.

And then according to John ----the one many of us may have thought of as the most obvious response to the question --- from our reading this morning verse 16 to 18 ----- Jesus came as Saviour to the world -----

---- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

So according to these 19 passages ---- all of which are explicit and not just suggestive ---- as to why Jesus came ----- and 13 of which are the words of Christ Himself.

This is what we have --- Jesus came ---

1. for judgment.
2. to preach
3. to fulfill the Law and the Prophets
4. to bring a sword
5. to turn people against one another
6. to save sinners
7. to call sinners to repentance
8. to seek and to save the lost
9. to serve and to offer Himself as a ransom for many
10. to testify to the truth
11. to do the will of God
12. as a light to the world
13. to give life
14. to die on the cross
15. as an atoning sacrifice for our sins
16. to bless us by turning us away from our wicked ways
17. to redeem and to claim us as His own
18. to be a sin offering in order that we might be made acceptable to God

and then finally ---- according to our passage today ---- Jesus came
19. to save the world ----- to be the Saviour of the world

So which one is it --- which ones is it ---- Why did Jesus come?

To judge or to save?

To give life or to die on the cross?

As a light or as an atoning sacrifice?

As one with a sword or as one to testify to the truth?

And of the course the answer is yes ---- yes He came for all of these reasons.

Jesus came for all of these reasons and many more no doubt --- to heal -----
----- to befriend --- to feed the hungry --- clothe the naked and so on ----- we
could be here for hours --- if we were to list all of the reasons why Jesus
came.

But if we were to simply pluck one passage --- and build our whole
argument around that one or perhaps even 2 or 3 passages ---- we can see
that the reasons we give for Jesus coming could be straight out of the Bible
but still miss the point as to why He came in its entirety.

For example if our proof texts are ----- John 9:39 ---- Matthew 10:34 -----
and Matthew 10:35 ----- we can argue ---- using the very words of the Bible
--- using the very words of Jesus Christ Himself ---- that Jesus came to judge
----- to bring a sword --- and to turn people against each other.

“To judge” ---- “to wield a sword” --- and --- “to turn people against each
other.” ----- are all the words of Christ Himself.

But of course there is far more to the story than just this.

Jesus came to save --- to love --- to set free --- to seek and to comfort --- to
reconcile --- to redeem --- to atone --- to serve ---- to sacrifice Himself -----
and so on.

To understand why Jesus came we need more than just a few plucked passages from here and there --- instead we need to take a far richer and deeper more faithful reading of scripture.

We need to look at the Biblical witness as a whole ----- including the Old Testament.

Jesus did say that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets ---- and we have to turn to the Old Testament to get the full picture of what He means by the Laws and the Prophets --- and their fulfillment.

And of the course the very same things can be said for virtually every and any question we want to turn to the scriptures for guidance with.

In order to truly explore the depths of all that God may say about something we must look at the whole of the Biblical witness and not just a handful of passages --- plucked from here and there.

And not just this but we must also seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we read the scriptures and also look to God's living Word ---- Jesus Christ.

Anytime the Church ---- anytime an individual Christian has been faced with tough decisions ----- this is what the reformed tradition has offered -----
--- God's Word ----- The Bible.

God's Word as illuminated by the Holy Spirit ----- John Calvin goes so far as to say that without the Holy Spirit enlivening and inspiring and guiding our reading of the Bible ---- the Bible can simply be read as black words typed on a white page

---- so yes God's word but God's word inspired by the Holy Spirit
----- and God's living Word --- Jesus Christ who isn't just a two dimensional character from a book.

But there's more as well ---- we have to consider the historical context --- look at other interpreters --- read the testaments in light of each other and so on.

Listen again to what the PCC teaches about the Bible ---- it was also our call to worship this morning ----

Chapter Five ---- From Living Faith ----- written by the Doctrine Committee of our national church --- in 1984.

Living Faith ---- on ---- The Bible

The Bible has been given to us
by the inspiration of God
to be the rule of faith and life.
It is the standard of all doctrine
by which we must test any word that comes to us
from church, world, or inner experience.

We subject to its judgment
all we believe and do.
Through the Scriptures
the church is bound only to Jesus Christ its King and Head.
He is the living Word of God
to whom the written word bears witness.

The Holy Spirit gives us inner testimony
to the unique authority of the Bible
and is the source of its power.
The Bible, written by human hands,
is nonetheless the word of God
as no other word ever written.
To it no other writings are to be added.

The Scriptures are necessary, sufficient, and reliable,
revealing Jesus Christ, the living Word.
Both Old and New Testaments were written
within communities of faith
and accepted as Scripture by them.
Those who seek to understand the Bible
need to stand within the church
and listen to its teaching.

The Bible is to be understood in the light
of the revelation of God's work in Christ.
The writing of the Bible was conditioned
by the language, thought,

and setting of its time.

The Bible must be read in its historical context.

We interpret Scripture

as we compare passages,

seeing the two Testaments in light of each other,

and listening to commentators past and present.

Relying on the Holy Spirit,

we seek the application of God's word for our time.

There's a lot in there ----- rich teachings --- helpful guidelines ---- faithful practices.

And we need to honour all these various ways of reading scripture and not just some of them.

When we have been faced with difficult decisions.

Decisions like ---- should we abolish slavery ---- or should we continue to have slaves?

Can our male leaders in the church be married or must they remain celibate?

Can the church stand behind the death penalty?

Do we ---- can we ordain women to positions of leadership ----- or are all positions of leadership in the church --- ordained or not ---- for men only?

Can we allow divorce --- can someone who has been divorced remarry ---- can someone who has been divorced be remarried by a minister in this church?

Can we condone assisted death?

Can a gay or lesbian person have a position of leadership in the church ---- ordained or not ordained?

Can we bless same sex marriages? ----- and so on ----- these are but a few of the challenges the church has faced and in some cases is still facing.

And of course as Christians we turn to God's Word and God's living Word for guidance.

Thankfully we don't just have to rely on our own words and thoughts or those of the cultures in which we live --- we have God's Word.

But of course it's not always straightforward --- people can argue opposing positions using God's Word --- they have in the past and still do today.

Just considering the question --- "Why did Jesus come?" --- we soon see that the Bible offers various answers --- some of which if taken all alone would paint a picture of a Christ quite different from the ones we treasure and hold to be true.

To the question ----- "Why did Jesus come?"

The Bible gives us a multiplicity of answers --- all helpful in different ways.

But for certain Jesus came to save us from sin.

Sin.

Something deep and innately within us --- a presence and force within each and every one of us that without Christ leads to ruin.

To be clear ---- sin isn't just bad behaviour ---- poor behaviour --- poor choices.

It is far far deeper than just choices we make or thoughts we have ----- it is ingrained within us part of our DNA if you like ----- something we can never free ourselves from ---- only Jesus can free us from sin.

That's why Jesus came --- to save us from the crippling --- rotting ---- ruining power and influence of sin --- and to restore us to right relationship with our creator once again --- the one in whose image we were all created.

That's the powerful ----- liberating --- saving truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That and much more as well ---- light --- truth ----- atoning sacrifice -----
 death on the cross ----- a ransom for many ---- to fulfill the Law and the
 Prophets ----- and so on --- as the scriptures reveal to us.

God loves us.

God loves us so much that He was willing to do whatever it took to destroy
 sin from having any lasting or final influence --- and so He did ----- in Jesus
 Christ --- the cross ----- Calvary.

That's why Jesus came --- salvation --- rescue plan --- setting things right
 once again ----- once and for all.

We can wrangle --- and quote ---- and pluck without contextualizing ---- at
 infinitum.

And we can do this not just about the question why Jesus came but many
 other questions as well --- and we can sometimes come up with differing
 opinions and perspectives.

Mutually exclusive ones even from time to time.

The Good News is ----- God always provides a way.

The road ahead --- the way forward -- the good and faithful road for those
 who listen and discern and seek His Holy way.

As the book of Jeremiah says ----
 "Stand at the crossroads ----- and look
 ask for the ancient paths,
 ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
 and you will find rest for your souls."

Jesus came to save us and to lead us.

When we follow Him we indeed know where the good way is --- and we
 indeed find rest for our souls.

When faced with difficult questions the Bible always provides.

Maybe not always in the ways we expect --- maybe not always with the answers we expect --- or even want.

But God always always always guides His people ----- He never leaves us wanting.

May we be at peace ---- resting assured of the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit of God ---- the will of God and the Son of God.

God still speaks --- and God still creates --- and God still re-creates ----- and God still speaks and creates and re-creates ----- in and through the church -- - the body of believers gathered in His name.

Jesus came so that we would not be left alone to battle it out with sin and corruption --- all on our own.

He is with us --- He is in us and He assures that we can ----- and will do and be ---- all that God desires of us.

To God be the glory --- great things He has done.
He so loved the world that He gave His one Son.

We are in good hands --- God always guides us --- leads us and steers us.

In fact -----

Difficult debates ---- challenging circumstances ----
--- these are precisely the places where God is most acutely at work --- saving ---- reconciling ---- redeeming --- always present.

Jesus came to save us --- to reside within us --- to guide and to lead us ---- to bring us back to the way that God intended us to be.

Holy --- pure --- beautiful ---- something wonderful to behold.

To God be the glory ----- now and forever.

Amen.