

Note for media people: Everything in bold should be put on a slide. If it is in red, change it to yellow for the slide. Keep it simple. There is no need to add anything to the slide just like we did two weeks ago.

There is a famous comic strip. Maybe you have seen it. It is two fish. And one fish swims up to the other and asks, “Hey buddy, how’s the water?” And the other fish responds, “What in the world is water?” This comic is more than just funny. It’s teaching a deeper point. The point is *just like fish don’t recognize the water they swim in, we don’t recognize the world around us, the culture that affects us.* It’s just the air we breathe. It’s the water we swim in.

So, it’s important that we step back, that we wake up, and ask the question, “What is the water we are swimming in? What is the air we breathe? What is the culture that surrounds us?”

Well, about 15 to 20 years ago, I remember hearing that we were living in a post-modern culture. In a post-modern culture, there is no absolute truth. There was a belief that each individual had to discover their own version of their own truth. Truth was not an absolute. Truth was a buffet and each person was supposed to pick which truth they liked best.

I experienced this perspective when I was in college. I was speaking with a woman about my age. I told her that I was a Christian and I was studying to be a Christian pastor. She said, “That’s great that Christianity is true for you, but it just isn’t true for me.”

That’s post-modernism in a nutshell. Jesus might be true for you, but it doesn’t have to be true for me. The individual gets to decide their own truth.

But over the last ten years or so, the individual continued to be elevated. So much so that the greatest sin according to modern day culture is to offend the individual. That idea has pushed us from a post-modern culture into a post-truth culture even a post-Christian culture.

In a post-truth culture, we are expected to keep our faith private because bringing our faith in to public could offend someone. So in a post-modern culture, a person might say, “Jesus might be truth for you, but he is not true for me.” But in a post-truth culture, a person might say, “That’s fine if you want to be a Christian, just keep your faith private. Just keep it hidden in your own home.”

This is the water that we swim in. This is the air that we breathe. This is the culture that surrounds us. And all of us at some level are being affected by this culture. For example, a few weeks ago, Pastor Bill cited a statistic from the [Barna Research Group](#) which polled millennials. Now it is even a little controversial to say the word millennials. Because labeling people like that might offend some people. So let me just say, *there was a study of people my age*, and it found that **47% of younger Christians believe it is wrong to share one’s personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith.** In other words, in a post-truth society, a person can no longer let their faith into their public life. In fact, it is considered wrong to let your public life be influenced by your private faith.

I think we need to step back and evaluate the water we are swimming in, the air we breathe, the culture that surrounds us. Is it good for Christians to keep their faith in Jesus private? Or, can I say, is it even true that Jesus should be locked up, quarantined in our homes? Or does something need to change? **(Changed graphic)** That’s what we want to explore as we continue our sermon series called Changed.

We don't want to just let the culture tell us what's true and good and right. We want to know the truth. We want to know the truth about the most important and controversial man in history: Jesus Christ. So today we are going to try to answer the question: **"Who is Jesus?"** Not according to culture or according to opinion. But what is the reality? What is the truth? Who is Jesus?

To answer that question, we are going to go back to Acts 2. Throughout this sermon series we have been in Acts 2. This section of the Bible explains what happened after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. It explains the birth of the Christian Church.

It all started on Pentecost, the Jewish harvest festival. The city is buzzing with Jews from all over the world. And two weeks ago, we heard how the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus' followers in fire. Fire separated and rested on them all. And they started to speak in different languages.

When this started to happen large crowds started to gather to figure out what was going on. So Peter got up to preach. And he began by explaining how the Holy Spirit was not coming on all people. And last week we heard from Pastor Bill that all people have value. And that's why the Spirit was coming on them all.

And now we will look at the rest of Peter's sermon. In this sermon, Peter will explain and prove exactly who Jesus is. Peter says, **"Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know." (Acts 2:22)** Peter says, You all know the truth. Jesus of Nazareth came from God. And God proved that he sent Jesus because Jesus did all sorts of miracles and signs and wonders. We all saw the truth with our own eyes.

"But," Peter goes on, **"This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross."** (Acts 2:23)

Although it was clear that Jesus was a good man who came from God, Peter's audience listened to the cultural leaders of the day and believed he was dangerous for society. They were affected by their culture, by the water they were swimming in, the air they breathed. So, they colluded with their culture and got rid of Jesus.

I believe that almost all of us here today would identify as Christian. If we were surveyed, we would check the box "yes" for Christianity. But I wonder how much we are colluding with our culture. In so many ways we are being told by the cultural leaders that Christianity is a close-minded religion, and maybe even dangerous. And it has affected us all at some level. We wonder whether or not Jesus is good for society. We wonder if Jesus is too old-fashioned, maybe even harmful. We wonder, "If I go public with my faith, am I just being arrogant?"

We all feel this pressure. Maybe it happens in little ways. We are about to eat lunch at work or in public, and we are embarrassed to bow our head and pray to the God who provided our daily bread. Maybe it happens in bigger ways, when we give in to the language and values of those around us. We started changing some of our deeper convictions we used to have about sex, money, life, and death. It's just the water we swim in.

Peter goes on, **But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.** (Acts 2:24) God raised Jesus from the dead. This changes

everything, doesn't it? No matter how I feel, no matter what society says, no matter what cultural leaders say, if Jesus died and came back to life then everything has changed. If Jesus was raised from the dead, then God has told us what is true.

But did it really happen? Is there any evidence for Jesus' resurrection? Is this just some fairytale myth? This is a big deal. Everything in the Christian depends on whether or not Jesus came out of the grave.

So Peter goes on to prove the resurrection. He begins by reminding the crowd of the prophecy from the Old Testament Scriptures. This is an incredible fact of Christianity. In fact, this is one major reason that Christianity is different than other religions. The Bible makes predictions hundreds of years before it happens and they come true. That's what Peter points out as the first proof of the resurrection. He quotes Psalm 16. 900 years before Jesus, King David wrote:

**You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
You will not let your holy one see decay.** (Acts 2:27)

Peter went on to say, "Hey guys, we know that David died and was buried. In fact, his tomb is with us to this day. We could go to his tomb right now and look at his bones. So David was not talking about himself. He was a prophet. And he was talking about Jesus, his great descendant, whose bones would not decay but be raised to life. In a way, Peter was saying, "Hey guys, we could go to David's tomb and find some bones. But if we would go to Jesus' tomb, we wouldn't find any bones because Jesus fulfilled the prophecy. Jesus rose."

So Peter says, we know that Jesus rose from the dead because it was predicted by the Holy Scriptures. And the Scriptures don't lie.

But that's not all. Peter goes on to say **God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.** (Acts 2:32) This is one of the most powerful proofs of the resurrection. Peter and the other Jesus-followers were witnesses of the resurrection. In fact, they were so confident that they saw Jesus alive that they were ready to die for it. And that's what happened. All but one of the Apostles died saying that they saw Jesus alive. That's how we got the word Martyr. Martyr is the Greek word for witness. It means a person who witnesses their faith by dying for it. Lots of people might die for their faith. They die for what they hope to be true. But nobody dies for what they know to be a lie. If they didn't see Jesus alive, they would not have died for it.

Peter gives one last proof of Jesus' resurrection: **Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.** (Acts 2:33)

Peter says that they saw Jesus exalted to the right hand of God, to the place of authority. And that Jesus has poured out on God's people the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit has changed people's lives. That is the final proof of Jesus' resurrection, and one that we can see very clearly. The proof of the resurrection are the thousands of hospitals, orphanages, and schools built in Jesus' name. The proof of the resurrection is the radical change that he has made in the lives of so many who have left their old selfish ways to live new lives of self-sacrifice.

So who is Jesus? Peter gives us the clear answer, **"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."** (Acts 2:36)

Peter says, “The resurrection of Jesus makes it clear. And everyone in his audience, and really the rest of the world can be sure, Jesus is the Lord and the Messiah. This means Jesus is the king of all. Jesus is in charge.”

So who is Jesus?

1. Jesus is king over all. Or if you prefer: Jesus is in charge.

It doesn't matter what the culture says. It doesn't matter what we feel. It doesn't matter what the leaders of society are telling us. We have clear proof. Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus is king. Jesus is in charge.

But Peter says something else. He says, “This Jesus is the one YOU crucified.”

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” (Acts 2:36)

Now, nobody in that crowd in Peter's day physically nailed Jesus' hands to the wooden cross. But they listened to the leaders of the day and they wanted to get rid of him.

Nobody here physically nailed Jesus' hands to the cross. But when we listen to our culture today, we are tempted to hide our faith, to push Jesus to the side. It's just the water we swim in, the air we breathe, the culture that surrounds us. When we let our faith become something marginal or private in our life we are colluding with culture. When we no longer let Jesus inform the rest of our lives, we are giving into the society of the day.

When the crowd understood what Peter was saying, that Jesus is king, that Jesus is in charge, they knew they screwed up. **When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”** (Acts 2:37)

That's what we want to know too, don't we? What are we supposed to do? If Jesus is really in charge, if Jesus is really king over all, what are we supposed to do?

Here's how Peter responds, **Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** (Acts 2:38)

Repent. But what does that word actually mean? Repent is a Greek word “Metanoeo”. It means to change your mind. Change the way you are going and thinking. Recognize that you and I have been wrong. Wake up to what's going on.

So what are we supposed to do?

2. Change the way you think about Jesus.

We need to admit that we have been wrong. We need to change the way we think about Jesus. Jesus is not just one of many religious leaders. Jesus is not just one truth among many. And Jesus is certainly not just some personal belief that is to be kept private. Jesus is God. Jesus is in charge. Jesus is king overall.

But how do we change the way we think? Peter says, be baptized in the name of Jesus. **Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** (Acts 2:38)

So repent, change your mind, open your mind to reality, and be baptized in the name of Jesus. No longer identify with the culture, with the world around you. Be baptized in the name of Jesus. Let Jesus wash all your sins away. Let your whole life be bound up in Jesus.

But what does that actually mean? Another Biblical author, named Paul, said it this way,

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:4)

When a person gets baptized, they are united to Christ. Their whole life is bound up in Jesus. Baptism is a “dying with Jesus” and “rising with Jesus”. Your life, your identity, is no longer about your performance. Your life and your identity are bound up in the perfect life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. You have died to your sins and your old way of life. And you have been raised to life a new life in Jesus. When God looks at you, he doesn’t see you. Your whole life is bound up in Jesus. So he see the perfect life, sacrifice, and victory of Jesus.

Think of it this way. We are all swimming in the culture. We get our version of truth from the culture. We let the culture gives us our identity and our values. But Peter is saying, “Jump out of the waters of the world, and swim in your baptism.” Swim in the waters of your baptism. And what does your baptismal waters tell you. You are a forgiven child of God. You are now in the family of God. God does not reject you. God has rescued you. Now you see Jesus as the truth. And he is right about everything. He is right about forgiveness, about love, about money, about sex, about faith, about everything.

He is our everything. He is not just one religious idea among many. And he is certainly not some private belief that is to be locked up. Jesus and his love and his teaching is our everything. He is the water we swim in, the air we breathe. He defines what’s true, not our culture.

But that might lead to a very important question, “But pastor, if I become a sold-out follower of Jesus, won’t I be a dangerous, weird, fanatic? Can’t we go overboard when it comes to following Jesus? I don’t want to be too Christian.”

That’s true. Usually when people get too zealous about their religion, they become weird or even dangerous. But is that what happen to the crowd that heard Peter’s sermon?

When Peter preached this sermon, 3000 people repented, changed their mind about Jesus, we baptized, had their sins forgiven, and received the Holy Spirit. And next week Pastor Bill will show you how those early Christians devoted themselves to God’s Word, prayer, the Lord’s Supper and to giving to the poor and loving their community.

When they swam in their baptism, when they swam with Jesus, they became more like him.

Swim in your baptism. Swim with Jesus, especially in the morning. Read a verse of the Bible, listen to a sermon. Swim with Jesus in the morning. Then as you go to work as you watch TV as you look at your Facebook feed you will be able to tell if the water you are swimming in is contaminated.

For too long we have gone along with the world. Yes, we need to be in the world. We are a part of the world. We want to love the world. But we don’t need to just drift along with the current of the world. Swim in the waters of your baptism. Swim with Jesus. Then you will know and live in the truth and the truth will set you free.

