

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

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Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?”

Consider if you will, that life is like driving down the road. One early morning, you come upon a guy standing by the side of the road, holding a sign with the name “Jesus”. You can tell by looking at him that there is something special about him. You’ve seen him before but kept on driving. This time, you decide to stop and see what’s up with this guy. You pull up, roll down your window, introduce yourself, and ask him if he’d like to join you.

You say, I’ve heard all about you, and I’m not sure how I feel about all of this. But I’m heading out on a journey, and who knows, maybe you could come in handy along the way. I’m not interested in what you think or say, just what you can do for me in a pinch, so if you want to come along I’m going to have you ride in the trunk.

What do you typically find in the trunk? Spare tire, jack, jumper cables, emergency supplies, along with various and sundry items. You keep things that are, for the most part, useful, even though they get ignored 99.9% of the time that you are driving. The spare tire doesn’t determine where you go. The jumper cables don’t decide how fast you drive. They are, like insurance, there in case something goes terribly wrong to help you get out of trouble.

But without objecting or complaining, Jesus climbs into the trunk. You close it, and get back on the road on the way you were already going.

After a while, you stop for your morning coffee. As you get ready to return to your car, you think about all of the things that you’ve heard about this Jesus character. Curiosity sets in and you pop the trunk.

Would you like to ride in the car, you ask? I’m not looking for answers, but I’m bored and could use some conversation. I’ve heard a lot about you, and well, you might be interesting to talk to. But, just to be clear, I’m driving. I pick the music, the destination, the meal breaks, and the path I take.

As Jesus climbs out of the trunk, you open the back seat of your car. You don’t want him to think that he has any influence. He gets to ride in the back while you keep control up front. He gets in, so do you, and you continue along the way.

As you drive that morning, you get to know a little more about Jesus. He tells stories which seem to have more going than just face value. You are amazed at what you learn from him even as he wants to know you, know more about you. He listens eagerly to you and your questions, responding when asked and never forcing himself on you.

By the time lunch rolls around, you are intrigued by the conversation, and you invite him to sit in the front seat when you get back on the road for the afternoon.

As you drive, you tell him about where you're going, and ask him what he thinks. He makes some observations about the destination, the path you are taking, pointing out some things you had never considered, suggesting an alternative you're still not sure about. The hours pass as Jesus somehow shares more about himself the more you share with him. Soon you begin to wonder what he thinks when that song comes on the radio that you like but know is less than ideal. You start looking to him as you approach each turn. Sometimes you take his advice, especially the times you agree with him. Sometimes you don't, in those moments when you secretly wish you had left him in the trunk. That is of course until you ignore him and get all turned around, only to find that he's ready to help you get back on track.

As you make a stop for dinner you consider the events of the day. At each step of the day's journey, Jesus has been ready and willing to go with you. You slowly realize that he is more than some kind of spiritual insurance, even though he is exactly what you need in the event of the worst happening. You realize that he is more than an occasional acquaintance or conversation partner, because he is always listening to your story and willing to share with you more of his. You realize that he is more than a navigator or co-pilot, and yet he is wise and insightful, compassionate and patient.

You see, if we hear Jesus' question to the disciples, "Who do men say that Son of Man is?" many, some who call themselves Christians and others who do not, will say that Jesus is nothing more than a servant leader, a teacher, even a friend. And Jesus is not less than these, but if Jesus is never more than these, then we have missed out on something even greater still. So long as we are in control, setting out first and then afterwards getting Jesus to help us out, we will always be on the wrong path, struggling and wandering along the way.

What we really need to do is hand over the keys on our way to the car and ask Jesus where he wants to go. The trouble is, we like doing what we want when we want how we want to do it. We don't know what Jesus may ask us to do, and we're unsure of where Jesus is going to take us today or tomorrow or next month or next year. We want to be in control, and the truth is that Jesus will always let us take the wheel.

But when we give up that need for control, when we ask Jesus to take the lead in the journey of life, then we begin to understand and live into the truth that was there all along. Jesus Christ is Lord. His Lordship is not an oppressive dictatorship, nor does it mean that he doesn't care about who we are or what we want. It doesn't mean that we don't get a say in how things will go in our lives.

It means that when asked, "But who do you say that I am?" We respond boldly, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." To say that Jesus is the Christ, is the Lord, is to take our cue from him so that we may be more of who we are called to be. It is to admit the need for a savior because of the reality of our sin. Our need for the Lord of life in the midst of brokenness and death. It is to fix the direction of the car and our life according to the way of the cross. It is to die to ourselves, learning each day and over the course of life to let what we want come second and then only when it accords with the Word of Scripture and the teaching of Christ's church.

And it is to trust and follow Jesus so much, that we find ourselves looking out of the window and into the lives of others. It is to see other people, family, friends, neighbors, strangers, whoever and wherever, and in seeing them wanting to bring them along so that they may know the one to whom we ascribe the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty. It is wanting to stop the car and invite anyone and everyone to join you as you follow Jesus who has come as a perfect offering for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world. It is to roll down your window and proclaim that it is Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord of Lords who we follow and serve and worship and adore.

I believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that has brought me safe thus far. It has brought me here, even as it may have brought each of you here. But the road of life often looks much different in the sanctuary at Trinity than it does in our homes, our schools, our jobs, and our community.

And so, I ask you to consider this morning, where Jesus is in your journey, not only here and now but back in the places to which we each will go after this service. Is he standing on the side of the road as you drive by wanting you to invite him along? Or is he bouncing around in the trunk, eager for you to see him as more than a last resort? Is he telling you his story from the backseat in the hope that you will come to know the truth? Or is he perhaps guiding you from the front waiting for you to trust him enough to set the course of your life on him?

Who do you say that Jesus is? Is he the Christ, the Son of the living God? Is he your Lord and Savior? Or is, "I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord" little more than putting a bumper sticker on a car going in the wrong direction?