

# Who is The Lord Jesus Christ?

## Message #7 Jesus, The Friend of Sinners Luke 15:2

Friends eat together. It is natural for you when you sit down at your work or school cafeteria to choose out your friends. When you go into a restaurant and you notice a few people talking around their table as they eat together, you understand that there is a bond of friendship among those few people.

When the Pharisees saw the Lord Jesus eating with publicans (tax collectors) and sinners they were horrified. They expected more discernment from a teacher-prophet who was come from God.

**We know that our Lord was more than a prophet.** He was God in the flesh. He was God incarnate. We know that He was the resurrection and the life. He came into the world to give eternal life to perishing sinners. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Him befriending those who were considered unworthy of even common friend-ship.

These beautiful words, **“This man receiveth sinners”**, though spoken in scorn by the Pharisees and scribes offer the greatest commendation ever given to the Saviour of men. **“This man receiveth sinners.”** There is a world of meaning in those few words.

**Dr. J.C. Ryle pointed out that no other chapter in God’s word has done more good for the souls of men than Luke chapter 15.** In response this scorn coming from the Pharisees, the Lord went on to give a three part parable to expound the truth – Jesus really does befriend sinners and receive them.

- **The shepherd sought the lost sheep.** He found it, brought it home on his shoulders and called his friends together to rejoice with him.
- **The woman sought her lost coin.** She swept the house until she found it and then called her friends to rejoice with her.

In both these accounts the interpretation is given that the angels in heaven also rejoice when one sinner is converted.

- **The Father received his prodigal son home.** The elder brother would have cast him out from the family home. But the Father’s attitude was very different. He said, this is reason to eat, drink and be merry for **“this my son was lost and now is found.”**

**So this is the real perspective of the Lord Jesus.** We cannot answer the question, Who is the Lord Jesus Christ? unless we understand that **“this man receiveth sinners.”** If you have a Pharisee’s heart the Lord’s grace toward sinners will remain a riddle to you.

So many use the name of Jesus in their religion, but they miss this all important fact – Jesus receiveth sinful men. Thus, they live and die knowing only the sound of His name, but know nothing of His saving grace.

**The Lord Jesus is the friend of sinners in every way you consider His life and ministry:**

- He came into a world of sinners
- He was the second Adam.
- He came amongst sons of the first Adam

**He came to save men out of this world; not to reform the world.**

The true reform movement of the Christian church is to preach the gospel and show the love and grace of the Lord Jesus to the worst of sinners. The church is not called to shore up a corrupt ungodly world, nor to change society by Christian polemics.

### 1. THE LORD JESUS BEFRIENDED ALL TYPES OF SINNERS

[1] **The Lord befriended demon possessed sinners.**

Legion, the demoniac of Gadara, is clear example of this (Luke 8:26 – 36).

- **This man was a long term slave of Satan** (Luke 8:27).
- **He was naked and mindless.** No one could reason with him. Even today his case would baffle all the doctors of psychology and psychiatry. No one could tame this man. He was out of His mind.
- **He was in chains and fetters** (Ch. 8: 29).
- **The devil drove him into the wilderness** (Ch. 8:29). Satan's ruled over him ruined him. Unconverted people must apply that reality to their own lives.

**Legion is an example of what all sinners will suffer one day.** When Satan gets His hands on your body and soul in hell - you will be tormented by the devil. Some people think they can live without the Lord Jesus. You might do so at comparative ease here in this world while it is ruled by God's common grace, where God restrains the depravity of men, but in the world to come, where the wicked are tormented day and night, all restraints will be off. Sinners will be handed over to Satan to suffer the full fury of his cruel mastery.

**The Lord brought about a tremendous change in Legion's life** (Ch. 8:29,v35). Note the amazing change in Legion:

“sitting at Jesus feet” – there was rest in Christ's friendship.

“clothed” – there was righteousness in Christ's grace.

“in his right mind” – there was reason restored. His madness was replaced with a meek and mild spirit - However, the people who came to see Legion were afraid. They were not afraid of Legion's new nature. They were afraid of the Lord Jesus - they asked him to go away from them (Ch. 8: 37).

## [2] The Lord befriended profligate sinners.

- **The Lord befriended the woman taken in adultery who was guilty of the red scarlet sin** (John 8). The law commanded that she should die for this crime. No one cared for her soul, apart from the Lord Jesus, who commanded her to “go and sin no more” (John 8:11).
- **The Lord befriended the un-named sinful woman at Simon the Pharisee's house** (Luke 7:36-50). Perhaps un-named to protect her from criticism. If all your sins were laid out on the table for examination, would anyone want to know you? The Lord accepted her anointing with the precious ointment, her wiping his feet with her hair and her kisses on his feet. “Wherefore I say unto thee here sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Luke 7:47). The Lord's final words to her gave her great peace of soul. “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” (Luke 7:50). The Lord was a true friend to this woman who had a broken and sinful past.
- **The Lord befriended the prodigal.** Going to the far country, wasting his life on sinful things (riotous living), made this young man odious to the self-righteous. But in this parable the Father's love turned the boy from a course of shame into the welcome-home of a father's forgiveness. This is the Lord Jesus of the New Testament. He is come to show mercy to lost souls. He is full of grace and ready to save the worst of sinners. His Father sent Him into the world, not to condemn sinners, but to save them (John 3:17).

## [3] The Lord befriended worldly sinners.

**The Lord saved tax collectors like Zacchaeus** (Luke 19:10). In Israel tax collectors were despised for their exorbitant and corrupt tax demands. They made themselves rich gouging men who may have been struggling to put bread on the table for their families. The Lord saved Zacchaeus, a noted

publican, when He passed through Jericho. Zaccheaus offered to pay back four-fold, the excess monies he had stolen. The Lord not only saved Zaccheaus from the sin of this world, He also saved him from the love of this world.

Do you confess that the world has gotten a terrible grip upon your heart? Then the Lord Jesus is the Saviour your need.

### **The Lord would have saved the rich ruler**

He came to the Lord Jesus asking: **“Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life”** (Luke 18:18)?

After hearing this ruler’s profess that he kept the commandments, the Lord touched the weak spot in his heart – materialism. The Lord commanded him to, **“Sell all... that thou hast”** (Luke 18:22).

This ruler loved this world too much for the good of his soul. **“He was very sorrowful: for he was very rich”** (Luke 18:23)

Mark records in his gospel that the Lord loved this rich ruler. **“Jesus beholding him loved him...”** (Mark ch. 10:21). The Lord genuinely called this young man, but the world had too much power over him. In fact we observe that he was not a ruler at all; the world ruled him.

### **[3] The Lord befriended religious sinners**

The criticisms of the religious were very severe (Luke 15:2). Those are the hardest kind of people to reach with the gospel. They are so filled with their own religious notions that they are puffed up with a sense of self righteousness. They assume so much about their own pious practices and accept so little of the truth of the gospel.

These Pharisees were seeking to dominate men. That is the very worst use of religion – to make yourself a leader to enslave others. That leads to religious bondage both for the poor victim and the religious leader, for He becomes the blind leading the blind. Christ came not to lead people into such bondage but to set us free. He said, **“If the Son therefore makes you free, ye shall be free indeed”** (John 8:36).

By the end of the Lord’s ministry many Jews believed on him. Lazarus was a living witness to the power of the Lord and each convert became a convincing witness to many others.

## **2. HE UNDERSTOOD SINNERS**

**[1] He understood their love of sin** (John 3:19).

**[2] He understood their trouble of heart** (Matt:11:28 -30).

**[3] He understood their blindness to the long term effects of sin** (John 8:24).

**[4] He understood their slowness to believe and receive Christ by faith** (John 6:37).

## **3. HE WAS CRUCIFIED WITH AND FOR SINNERS**

The Lord’s ultimate display of friendship toward sinners was His death on the cross at Calvary **“Greater love hath no man than this that a man should lay down his life for His friends”** (John 15:13).

**[1] It can be no accident that our Lord was crucified with two malefactors, criminals of the worst kind.**

That was a fulfillment of prophecy. **“He was reckoned among the transgressors”** (Luke 22:37).

**[2] To die on a Roman gibbet made our Lord a curse for sin.** **“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree”** (Gal. 3:13).

Jews understood only too well the significance of death on a tree. **Note the words “being made a curse for us.”** This is one of many texts in the N.T. that underlines substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus for

His people.

**asked Roger Valenziano, who was visiting from Calgary, Alberta, Canada** - he was raised a Roman Catholic in Brazil - what do Roman Catholics get from their focus on the cross – especially at Easter. And I also asked what do Roman Catholics show when they wear crosses and pray through the sign of the cross?

He stated that from their familiarity with the image, or wood of the cross they get nothing of the gospel message from it. He later followed up with an email for he felt he had not told me enough:

Here is his email: “... I think the best answer is that there is a mix of pity and sacrifice, but as an example to be followed, and not as a substituting one for our sins. Catholic faith is still primarily based on good works.”

**This is important because the Bible tells us that on the cross the Lord was doing a solitary work for His people.** He was suffering in our place. God the Father made His Son to be a curse for us that we would know no curse.

**The doctrine of substitution is vital to grasp a full understanding of the gospel.** We must see that Christ took our place and died in our stead.

**The N.T. writers make so much of this:** Rom. 5:8 1Peter 2:24.

The Lord Jesus himself said, **“This cup is the N.T. in my blood, shed for you”** (Luke 22:20). That means that Jesus shed his blood for us, in our place, as our substitute.

**The Lord Jesus did not need to die for His own sins.**

- He was not a victim at the cross at the hands of cruel men.
- He could have called the angels to deliver him.

He could have used His own power, as when men came to arrest Him. They fell backward by the force of the Lord’s power emanating from Him. He could have used that power over and over to flee from the cross, but His death on the cross was His special work. He came into the world to be a personal sacrifice to make atonement for the sins of His people. Unless He went through with death and suffering on that tree we would have no gospel news for sinners.

**Then the other notion Roger alluded which is held by Roman Catholics is that Christ died as an example for us to follow.**

Should we be nailed to a cross? Many Roman Catholics imitate the crucifixion. They do this in the Philippines and other countries around the world, with the encouragement of the church of Rome.

**There is no salvation in a literal imitation of the death of Christ on the cross. It is purely the effort of human self-will, which is weak and flawed.** Such a human performance is powerless to purchase salvation. Paul the apostle warned the Christians at Galatia that if they fell back on their own efforts or works for salvation then, **“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace”** (Galatians 5:4). Suffering without grace will save nobody.

**It was grace that planned the cross to save sinners.** The gospel message is that Christ came into the world to save sinners.

**To provide this grace to us our Lord personally and really suffered on that cross.** He drank the whole cup of God’s wrath against sinners so that there is none left for those who trust in His saving work.