

# Jesus is my Master

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[ 0 : 00 ] Folks, great to see you this morning with a finger in Colossians chapter 3. I want everybody to hold their Bibles up in front of you. If you need to grab a Bible roundabout, grab a Bible roundabout.

But everybody needs you to do this. You need to hold your Bible here. And I'm going to pray in just a second, lead us in prayer. But I want us to understand what I'm going to pray. So I want everybody to hold their Bibles above your head.

So we're going to pray together that we would sit under the Word of God. So this is God's Word. This is the Word of life that we need to be at work in our lives. This is the Word of our Creator. And we want our heart attitude to be that we want to sit under and listen to His Word. So we're going to pray that we'd sit under the Word. I want everyone to put their Bibles on the floor. And metaphorically, don't do this actually. But picture yourself standing on the Bible, okay? We're going to pray that we would stand on the Word of God. That this would be the foundation, the sure foundation for our lives and our times.

[ 1 : 00 ] And that we would build our lives, base our lives on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God as we find it in the Bible. And then thirdly, I want you to hold it on your chest. And we're going to pray that the Word of God would be at work in us.

So this Word, we believe it's alive and it's active that God speaks today. And we're going to pray that God, by His Spirit, would be molding us and prompting us and challenging us and comforting us and encouraging us and making us more into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ, for His glory. So that's what we're going to pray. I'm going to pray it now, okay? Heavenly Father, thank You so much for Your Word. Father, where would we be without Your life-giving Word?

And so, Father, we pray that You would help our attitude this morning, that You would help us to sit under Your Word, that You would help us to stand on Your Word, and that You would, by Your Spirit, work in us by Your Word.

And Father, we just want this morning to be of glory to You. And so we pray these things in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Well, with Colossians chapter 3 open in front of you, let me ask us a random rhetorical question just to set us off on the right track today.

[ 2 : 14 ] And here's the question, and it is a bit random, but stick with me. This is going somewhere okay. Do you know where your local pizza delivery place is? Yeah?

Yes. Know where it is? Alex and I had a lovely Domino's pizza a couple of weeks ago. We were getting our oven fixed, and we thought, no, we're not going to cook. We're going to get a Domino's. So we went to Domino's. The reason I know where Domino's pizza is, our local pizza joint is, it's because so often they send people out onto the street around about us as walking billboards. I don't know if you've seen people like this. Yeah? So the people that they employ to go and stand on the street corner, and they're dressed as a giant Domino's pizza box, and they've got the words on the front, any pizza, any size, \$6.99.

This is normally what they say. And I always read this, read that every time I see it, and I think to myself, who is ringing up and ordering a small, right? Who's ordering a small with that deal? But this is the image I want us to carry through these verses today, because Paul is going to ask these Christians on Colossae to think of themselves, picture themselves as walking billboards.

[ 3 : 23 ] Now, we saw at the end of last week, Paul encouraged them, and this is verse 17, if you want to track with me the text, verse 17. He's encouraging them to think of worship as total. That's where we left off last week.

Worship is total. Remember these false teachers? They're in the background in Colossae. They're pushing a compartmentalized, experiential, individualized Christianity.

And Paul is saying, don't have any of it. Because this new identity in Christ, this was verses 1 to 4 of chapter 3, this new identity, because Jesus Christ, if you're a Christian, has claimed you, and he's changing you, the fact that that is true, that's an identity in your life, it shouldn't just affect your Sundays.

It should affect your everyday. It should affect your Monday, and your Tuesday, and your Wednesday, and your Thursday, and your Friday, and your Saturday, and your back to Sunday. The whole thing should be affected by this new identity that you have in Christ.

It was Dorothy Sawyers, the author of the last century, who commented and said this, How could anyone be interested in a religion that is no concern for nine-tenths of their life?

[ 4 : 30 ] And that is so true, isn't it? Why would anyone be interested in a religion that is no concern for nine-tenths of your life? Paul would heartily agree. It should transform your individual life.

This is what he's already said. It should transform your corporate life together as a church, as this brought together body. We saw that last week. And today we're going to hear him tell them, this is verses 18 to chapter 4, verse 1, that it should transform your home life.

And so he's speaking to this church. Remember, this church made up of tons of different kinds of people, lots of different things going on in their lives. And he's going to get them to think about their marriages. And he's going to get them to think about their families.

And he's going to get them to think about their work. And in those areas of their lives, he wants them to think of themselves as walking billboards. And the question then is displaying what, saying what?

Any pizza, any size, no, no, no. He wants them to say, with your life, display the message that Jesus is my Lord. Come with me to the text.

[ 5 : 40 ] Here's the key little phrase to this little section. Paul uses that word, Lord. Do you see it? We saw it kind of creep in at the end of last week. Lord or master, that's the word. He uses it six times in these nine verses.

Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord. The whole of their lives has to be lived in the sphere of the Lord. So when it comes to these three years of their lives, the message is, Jesus is my master.

He's my Lord. So people from the world should be able to look into your lives, dear Colossian Christians. And the same for us today is true.

and he should in one way or another be able to conclude that Jesus is your master. He's your Lord. Jesus is the master that you live for.

He's the one that you seek to give glory to. He is the one that you seek to present to the world. And I think it's fair comment to say, and we'll just acknowledge this up the top, that what Paul is urging here couldn't be any more counter-cultural.

[ 6 : 41 ] In our day, I mean, this stuff about husbands and wives and families and work, it runs so deeply against the grain of how our society tells us to think.

But the truth is, and we need to hear this before we immediately jump to us, it was just as counter-cultural in the day that Paul wrote it, except that the cultural pendulum is on the other side. In the first century, who were the individuals deemed to be lower down the social ladder? Women, children, and slaves.

But when it comes to their marriages and their families and their work, who does Paul address first in each instance? Wives, children, and slaves.

You see what he's doing? You see how he's bestowing on them a real counter-cultural dignity and worth, and he's massaging home that truth that he stressed at verse 11?

[ 7 : 47 ] That in Christ, God has made them one. In other words, though the God-designed differences in creation, they remain. There's no second-class citizens in God's kingdom, because this new family that God has birthed, you're all one in Christ.

This is what he's been saying all the way through this letter. So we need to understand that these words were just as counter-cultural then as they are today.

Paul says, Be walking billboards that say to the world as you live your life, Jesus is my master. He's my master. He's the Lord. And do that in your marriage. Do you see it?

Verses 18 and 19. Do it in your marriage. Now here's what we need to understand. As Paul speaks to husbands and wives, he's got the ultimate marriage in mind.

The ultimate marriage in mind. The one that our marriages on earth are supposed to be based upon and point to and reflect. And that's the marriage that will happen on the last day when Jesus Christ

our Lord returns between him and his bride, the church.

[ 8 : 58 ] That's the ultimate marriage. And Paul's got that in mind as he turns to address husbands and wives here in Colossae. Because their relationship together, the way that they relate to one another, the way that they love one another, is meant to project and point to that ultimate marriage.

So to the married woman in this church, she says, In the same way that we've just sung, that the church submits to Christ, I urge you to reflect that by submitting to your husbands.

And let me just deal with that word, submit, because it's a word that doesn't land softly to our 21st century ears. I guess because we've heard of people who have horribly abused that word. And because we live in a culture that is so deeply anti-authority.

But let me just tell you, and this is the best quote on this I read this week. Let me just give this to you. This is how one commentator defines submission. Submission is a voluntary willingness. And it's so key, isn't it, that word voluntary. Voluntary willingness, a choice to recognize and put oneself under the loving leadership of another. So submission here has nothing to do with a wife's inferiority.

[ 10 : 17 ] Absolutely nothing to do with that. And that's clear as you trace the use of this word through the Bible. Because think what we've just sung. Jesus himself, the one who is fully and equal God.

We see in John's gospel, we just sang it, he submitted himself to the will of the Father. If you trace it through in the Old Testament, we see God describe himself as being a helper to humanity.

In creation, we see in creation. In creation, we see in the same way Eve in the creation account, she's described as being a helper to Adam. It's nothing to do with inferiority.

And if it's nothing to do with that, equally it's nothing to do with the husband's superiority. Thinking he has carte blanche to rule the roost, that he's got license to take advantage.

And Paul will make that so clear by what he goes on to say next to the husbands as they pursue the Lord. But Paul says, wives, bring all your gifts and your talents the way that God has wired you.

[ 11 : 15 ] And bring it to your marriage. And in the same way that the church submits to Christ out of love, I want you to reflect that as you affirm and you support and you encourage and you look to the loving and sacrificial Christ-like leadership of your husbands.

It was Elizabeth Elliot, who was the late wife of Jim Elliot, who was the missionary to Ecuador. She's written some wonderful stuff on all of this if you want to go and check it out.

Elizabeth Elliot said this, and I think this is very good, otherwise I wouldn't have put it in, okay. But she said, the fact that I'm a woman doesn't make me a different kind of Christian.

But the fact that I am a Christian makes me a different kind of woman. And you see, as much as Paul's calling Christian wives to be so counter-culturally and attractively different, he's calling Christian husbands to be just as radical.

And so to husbands, he urges them in the same way, in the same way that Christ has sacrificially laid down his life out of love for his bride, the church.

[ 12 : 34 ] That's how I want you to love your wives. Now feel the sting of that one of your husband here this morning. Remember, he's just teased out in this letter what love looks like, verse 12.

Do you remember it last week? Love expresses itself in compassion, in humility, in meekness, in patience. And in verse 13, it expresses itself in forgiveness and long-suffering.

So the kind of love that Paul is calling husbands to here is a love that always dies to self and puts somebody else first.

And of course, it's the love that Jesus so wonderfully exemplified and showed, isn't it, on the cross? The one who had all authority in heaven humbled himself by coming down from heaven to earth to seek out and to die for and to give his life for, to shed his blood to redeem and to purify and win his bride, the church.

He sets that bar. Then do you want to get them? He sets that bar. Do you see how that is what biblical, true, sacrificial, following after Christ with all your heart, love looks like for a husband?

[ 13 : 52 ] How counter-cultural then and how counter-cultural today? Husbands, let me ask you here this morning. If you are blessed to be a husband, do you love your wife like that?

Do you love your wife like that? So do you see what he's saying to those who are married in this congregation in Colossae? He's saying in your marriages, it's together you pursue the Lord.

Together you pursue the Lord. And the way that you love one another, and the way that you relate to one another, and the way that you sacrificially love one another, you are to be walking billboards

that say, Jesus is my master.

And you are to display that ultimate marriage for the world to see. And that means, friends, that if we are married here today, people should be able to look into our marriage and say, I've got no understanding of what that is about, except that that reflects something of what Jesus did for his church.

That's the ultimate marriage. That is the ultimate marriage. It's not this one, it's that one. And it's so important that we have that in mind. Because if we look for completion, if we look for something kind of satisfying fulfillment, and our marriage is down here, and let me tell you, it will set us up massively for a fall.

[15:10] Massively for a fall. Some of you might remember the film, and this is me being a 90s child, okay, the film Jerry Maguire when it came out in 1996. Jerry Maguire, this film about a lovestruck sports agent.

It was the reason I went into law. No, it wasn't. It wasn't. But Jerry Maguire was one of the most iconic and most quoted films of the 90s, if you remember it. And two of the most famous quotes from that film were, number one, the one that his sports, American football playing client said to him, and you'll remember this one, Jerry, show me the money.

That's what he said. Jerry, show me the money. That was one quote from that film that everybody loves to quote. The second one from that film comes when Jerry speaks to the woman that he loves, and he says to her those three words.

He says, you complete me. And it's so cute. And Hollywood loved it. And it sold millions upon millions upon millions of tickets.

But let me let you into a little secret this morning, this afternoon. It's nonsense. It's absolute nonsense. To think that another human being could complete you, it's nonsense.

[16:30] Because, now don't hear me wrong, I love being married to Alex. She's not in here today. She's behind the back. I can't say this again. She's my best friend. If I had an evening off, she's the person I wanted to spend it with. I absolutely love her.

But she knows, and I tell her this on a regular basis, that she does not complete me. And I can tell you from my own experience, I can tell you this categorically, that I certainly do not complete her. Okay? I'm an idiot. I do not complete her. Friends, if we look for completion, for satisfaction in anyone else but Jesus Christ, we will set ourselves up for a fall.

And it was C.T. Studd, the famous English cricketer, turned missionary to China, who encouraged his wife to say a little poem to himself every day, that went, Dear Lord Jesus, as you are to me, dearer than Charlie ever could be.

That's exactly what Paul is saying, isn't it? That's exactly what Paul is saying. The ultimate marriage. Keep that in mind. Because I realize that the truth for many of us here today is that your experience of marriage has been anything but what you see here.

[17:41] So painfully true. It's been anything but what you see here. In fact, it's been the polar opposite. And I realize there'll be some of us here today, and either you're struggling in your married life, or you're thinking to yourself, will I ever be married?

Will that ever happen to me? Or whoever you are here today, let me encourage you to fix your eyes on that ultimate marriage. That if you're a Christian here today, if you're faithless in Jesus Christ, that you will be part of that bride.

To fix your eyes on the perfect husband, in Jesus Christ, what he's done for you, shedding his blood for you, to buy you, ransom you to himself on the cross, and to fix your eyes on that marriage.

And if you're married, to fix your eyes on that marriage. And as you fix your eyes on Jesus Christ, as the spirit of God, transform you more into his likeness, display his glory in your marriage.

So in your marriages, Paul says, be walking billboards that display the message, Jesus is my master. And do the same in your family. Verse 20, we'll move on.

[18:47] So there's Paul's plea to the family. Again, let's just pick out the verbs. Children. And I think he's thinking about children, who are living with their parents, and they're old enough to understand, and make their own decisions, and respond.

He says to them, obey. Obey your parents. This is what he says. And of course, he's rooting that instruction in the fifth commandment. That God had given Israel as a way of living that pleased the Lord.

It's a wonderfully, is it not, dignifying thought in this day that Paul writes to children and says that in your lives, in the simple fact that you obey your parents, you can glorify the Lord.

As their parents help you understand, that the family unit is something that the God, in his grace and in his mercy, has put in place. Not for your detriment, but for your good, for your protection, for your nurturing, and for your enjoyment.

Obey your parents. This is what he says to the children. And so quickly off the back of that, he says to fathers, okay, I got a sting from the first one there. I've got the sting from the second one as well.

[ 19 : 53 ] Fathers. What does he say? Speaking to them, I take it first and foremost as the ones he wants to take the spiritual, sacrificial, and loving lead in the home.

Because if you read around on this one, men in the Roman first century context have got a real reputation for being domineering in the home. So he's writing to them and says, Christian fathers, do not provoke your children by being harsh with them.

Or discourage them because you lay upon them heavy expectations of what you want them to become. Which I take it is his way of saying, don't treat your children like you own them. Or that they're a burden to you.

Rather encourage and love and nurture and instruct and pray for and take an interest in and care about and get to know and love your children.

This is what he's saying. Because they are a gift from the Lord, they're a precious heritage from him, and your heavenly father loves these children way more than you do in his gracious and perfect way.

[ 21 : 01 ] Parents here today, let me ask you, do you love your children like this? Do you love your children like this? Let me ask you, come at it from a different angle. What do you long to be true for them as they grow up?

I was thinking on it this week for my two little girls. What do you long to be true for them as they grow up? And our ultimate longing for them shouldn't be that they'd come top of the class, that they'd win the egg and spoon race on sports day, that they'd get into that school, that they'd get that job, that they'd get their grade 8 on the clarinet.

Our ultimate longing for our children is that they should come to know the Lord Jesus as their saviour and their king and know it for themselves. It should be our ultimate longing for them.

Because that is the source of their greatest joy. You know, I long that Chloe and Grace would grow up and they would have the most boring testimonies ever. Honestly, the most boring testimonies ever.

Because I remember when I was at a minister's lunch after Chloe was just born and I was sharing something that my fellow brothers and sisters could pray for me and I said, would you pray for my little girl? Just being handed this bundle of responsibility straight out of the womb, I don't know what to do.

[ 22 : 10 ] And they simply prayed for me and they prayed for her and they said, Lord Jesus, would it be true for her that there would never be a day where she wasn't conscious of you as her Lord and her Saviour and her King.

And do you know what? Those words almost four years ago have stuck with me ever since. And that's what I pray for my girls. Now how is that going to happen? What's my job as a parent?

Well, my job, I can't make them Christians, can I? It's your theology of salvation. You can't make them Christians. But my job as a parent is to put all the Jesus-shaped kindling that I possibly can around their lives as Alex and I, we live out in front of them a vibrant love for and a need for the Lord Jesus Christ and pray that the Holy Spirit would take that kindling, spark it and ignite it.

That's my job. And I tell you what, it's just personally, it's wonderful to think we do that in a church family context, isn't it? Because they have got tons of spiritual sisters and brothers and tons of spiritual grandmothers and grandfathers.

And it means so much to us that you are praying for those girls and it means so much I know to the other parents in here to know that you're dedicating yourselves to praying for them as well. That's our job. That's our job.

[ 23 : 30 ] It says fathers, be the father that your children need them to be. And I hope this encourages you. This was John Wesley. I was reading this week, John Wesley, the guy who was the former slave ship master turned Anglican minister who wrote the famous song Amazing Grace.

He wrote this and I hope this encourages parents here. He said, I learned more about Christianity from my mother than I did from all the theologians in England. I learned more about Christianity from my mother than I did from all the theologians in England.

Keep going, parents. Keep going. Keep going. What a countercultural vision for the Christian family he lays out here. In your families, be walking billboards that say Jesus is my master.

And thirdly, make him known in your work. Make him known in your work. Verse 22, Paul speaks to slaves. Now, I don't think that's slaves like our minds would immediately think like 20 years a slave, the film, or Selma.

Paul's speaking into a first century culture where slavery is a very different thing. It's why if you've got an ESV there, the translators are so keen to footnote the use of that word all the time with the word bondservant.

[ 24 : 49 ] You might notice that if you've got an ESV there. Because slave is a broad term that can just describe anybody who's under the authority of another. Slaves in this day are often well-educated professionals.

Bankers are slaves. Doctors were slaves. In fact, I was reading this week that up to two-thirds of the Roman Empire at this point are deemed slaves. Whole economy based on slaves.

And so, although it's not identical to it, it is actually a lot closer to our modern-day employee-employer relationship that he's got in mind here as he writes. And look what he says to them.

He says, obey. He says, work well. Be known for your reliability and diligence and gain a good reputation in the eyes of your master.

And you see how he says, do it not just when the master is watching, do it all the time. Why? Well, because the eyes of your true master are on you all the time.

[ 25 : 52 ] And it's a heart thing, isn't it, what he's saying here? Work for the Lord from your heart. from your heart. And when he returns, your master, you will receive your inheritance.

And so into a culture today that thinks little of having an extra five minutes on your lunch break or being five minutes late in the morning or slagging off a colleague or client behind their back or surfing the internet until the boss walks in the room and then changing the thing to pretend that you are working.

Paul says, work for the Lord. I don't know if you remember that as well that the Bed and the Apprentice the last series when we're talking about dishonesty where the guy was asked to interview about some false claims that were made on his website and the person interviewed and asked him did you write them and he said, no, I don't know how they came onto my website.

And he said, did you write them? And he said, well, I could have written them. He said, did you write them? Oh, there's a good chance I could have written them. Did you write them? Yes, I wrote them.

To a world that thinks nothing of lying and of deceit, Paul says, be different, work for the Lord.

Work for the Lord. Show them in the way that you work. Show them that Jesus is your master.

Show them how Jesus has claimed you and changed you and do it all the time.

[ 27 : 17 ] I remember the job I was in before this one down south. Some of my colleagues would get together and they would jokingly have their own little award ceremony. And one of these little awards that they used to kind of hand out every year was the Dolly Parton Award.

The Dolly Parton Award wasn't for somebody who was good at singing. The Dolly Parton Award went to the person who was seen to be simply working nine to five. Right? It was a corporate law firm, very different world, simply working nine to five.

But the subtext of that award was that this person we saw did the bare minimum. This person we saw was not interested in going the extra mile. They were quite happy to clock in and clock out.

This person we saw had no interest in the business and he had no interest in the people that worked there. They got the Dolly Parton Award. Now don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not saying sell yourself to your work.

Don't do that. But the Christians should never be up for the Dolly Parton Award. We should never be up for that. We should deeply care about what we do because we are serving the Lord.

[ 28 : 16 ] Friends, we want to be the best kind of employees, do we not? The best kind of employees. The best to hire, the best to work with. Think about your place of work. Is that how you're known? If you were ever to move on from your place of work, would people be deeply saddened that you've moved on?

Or would they be delighted to see the back of you? Do people at work know that you work for the higher master? Think about how that might work out in your office tomorrow morning as you speak about your weekend.

Do they know what you do? Do they know who the master is? And to masters, that is to bosses, Paul says, verse 1 of chapter 4, remember Christ is your master too. Therefore, treat your slaves justly, treat them fairly, treat them considerately.

And particularly in the immediate context that he's picturing, if your slave is a fellow believer, I think that's right at the heart of the little letter of Philemon, if you want to go home and read that, which is written at the same time, written to a member of this Colossian family who was a slave and a master, talking about how the gospel has totally transformed that relationship.

But Paul says, in your work, in your work, be walking billboards, whatever you do, be walking billboards that say, Jesus is my master.

[ 29 : 34 ] He's my master. So let me just ask you once again as you close, do you know where your local pizza delivery shop is? Do you know where it is? Paul argues these believers to live in such a way that when people look at you and they look into your home, they see walking billboards that are displaying the message, Jesus is our master.

He's my master. Now here's where I want to end today. Now you probably know that I love to quote songs. Here's another song for you. It's one that my dad used to play in the car when I was growing up by Scotland's favorite son called Rod Stewart.

And it went like this. I wish that I knew what I know now when I was younger. Remember that one? Some of us? No? Some of us remember it. I wish that I knew now, I wish that I knew what I know now when I was younger.

Now here is what I know now. Okay? I've been doing this marriage thing for almost eight years. I've been doing this parenting thing for almost four years. I've been doing the work thing between a mixture of part-time and full-time since I left school almost 16 years ago.

And nothing has taught me more but the depths of the sin in my own heart and the realities of living in a broken and a fallen world and my need for help and my need for my brothers and sisters and for my absolute need for the grace of God and for a savior in my life.

[ 31 : 08 ] I don't quite like marriage, being a husband, being a father, and being an employee. Because if we leave these verses this morning and the message is internal, let's try harder, let's be better.

Let me just tell you from the little experience that I've got that we've totally missed the point. This passage should throw us to our knees saying, Lord Jesus, we need you.

we need you. And it should send us running to the Christ that's right at the heart of this letter to Colossians. Remember the Christ who has claimed us, that our identity is not in these things, our identity is in him.

The Christ who's claimed us, the Christ who's changing us by his spirit, and the Christ who loves to show grace to those who would humble themselves before him and say, Lord, I need you.

Now I realize we'll have hit a lot of painful things this morning. And I hope a lot of challenges and a lot of encouragements at the same time as well.

[ 32 : 15 ] But just as we close, let's not rush on from this today. And just before I pray, and I'm going to pray for the different people that come out of this one, I just want you to have a moment of silence.

And wherever this passage finds you this morning, I want you just to bear your soul to the Lord. God, because he knows and he cares and he calls us, doesn't he, to cast our burdens on him because he cares for us.

And then I'll pray and we'll be done. And so, Father, we thank you so much for the Lord Jesus, the image of the invisible God, the creator and the sustainer and the redeemer of all things.

And we thank you that you are the God of all grace and for the gifts that you give us so unmerited, particularly the gift of marriage and the gift of family and the gift of work.

And so, Lord, we ask that as we respond to this passage this morning, I ask, Father, for those who are deeply hurting, Father, that you would bring healing.

[ 33 : 34 ] Father, for those who are dwelling on mistakes, I pray that you would bring forgiveness and knowledge of that. For those who are struggling, I pray that you would bring strength and endurance and patience.

and for all of us, lords, I pray that you would help us to fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, our perfect and all-sufficient Savior.

So, Father, help us to look to him this week, we ask, in Jesus' precious and worthy name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.