

The Horizon of Christ - Part 1

by T. Austin-Sparks

Jesus is God's representative for all purposes, and his life of self-emptying and humility sets the tone for our surrender and submission to God's will.

Duration: 45:07

Scripture: Genesis 22:18, Matthew 1:23, Matthew 8:12, Matthew 13:42, Matthew 13:50, Matthew 22:13, Matthew 25:30

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the greatness of Jesus Christ and the purpose of God's plan for humanity. The goal is for believers to have a fresh understanding of Christ's greatness and to be conformed to his likeness. The speaker also discusses the importance of servanthood and how it was exemplified in Jesus. The sermon touches on the delicate topic of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the social stigma she faced as a result of her virgin birth. Overall, the sermon highlights the significance of Christ in God's plan and the need for believers to embrace servanthood and strive for a deeper understanding of Jesus' greatness.

Transcript

No one who was here this morning would expect or be happy if I were to seek to traverse the whole of the ground which we covered then. It had to be full and comprehensive to lay a foundation. We shall henceforth break it up into smaller fragments.

But to remind you and to gathering fresh comers, let me repeat that what is before us, both by actual words in the New Testament, while not so translated, and by many comprehensive statements, Jesus is declared and defined as God's horizon for all his purposes, interests, and activities. The horizon meaning the farthest range of God's vision and the inclusive sphere of God's interests and activities. So I have said that word in the original language actually occurs in the New Testament.

God has horizoned everything by his son. What does that really mean and amount to? Well, just this, that God's son, our Lord Jesus, is set by God the Father as the norm, the representative of what will eventually be universal. Universal will be an expression of the Son of God.

Everything within that universal horizon will take its character from him. To him, to it, he will give what is true of himself. He, therefore, must be very great if it is to be Christ universal, beyond whom there is nothing because he is the horizon.

You know quite well that although you may stand at a given point and see the horizon, as you advance toward it, no matter how far and how long, be it thousands of miles, the horizon is still ahead of you and just as much ahead of you. You cannot get beyond the horizon on this earth, in this world, in this creation. So, when God has things, ultimately, as he intends to have them, the whole sphere will be found an expression of his Son, a manifestation of his Son.

He is, in all things, to be preeminent. He is to fill all things and all things are to be summed up in him. He is the sum of God's intention.

How great is this one whom we call our Lord Jesus. The object of this time, therefore, is two-fold. That we may receive a new and a fresh impression of the greatness of our Christ and that we may learn what he is like, to which likeness God has destined us to be conformed.

I have said he is the Lord, the representative of what will eventually be universal. Therefore, therefore, Jesus, and I use that word as the New Testament uses it, when he is called Jesus in the New Testament, references always to his earthly life and work. His humanity.

Jesus must have within him, within his own person, and within his own work, all the features and factors of what will be universal, eventually. Wherever you touch him, you are not touching something limited, something confined. You are touching that which is going to expand to the full dimensions of eternal ages and eternal conditions.

Have you ever tried, might be a useful occupation, but I will pronounce failure and despair upon it right away. Have you ever tried to put Jesus into any one of the human categories known to us? We know the various human categories. Human race is divided up into these.

We can say our people, he, she, they, belong to a certain category. Maybe category of disposition, of temperament, of sex, of nationality, and race, of language, and so on and on. Categories of humanity are many.

Have you ever tried to confine Jesus to any one of these? Have a try. We would say that a person who lived in a certain time in this world's history would certainly not be suitable for the life and conditions of our day. They were alright for their time, but they just wouldn't fit into our time.

People of our time would not just fit comfortably into the situation so many centuries ago. There is the category of time. Can you put Jesus into any one of these? I say your effort will be a total failure.

The most remarkable thing about him is that he makes an equal appeal to men and women. He has the strength on the one side, the tenderness on the other, the courage on one side, the sensitiveness on the other. We can go on like that.

He has outstripped every age and generation. He's bigger than any time in this world's history. He is not only different from, but above every kind of human being.

This one is suitable to East and to West, to North and to South equally, equally suitable. He just fits in as much in the Orient as he does in the West. Something about him that is not true of any other person in creation.

We said this morning he is unique. He's above all categories and yet he fits in and suits every category. He is as much a friend of the illiterate and ignorant and uncultured as he is of the educated.

It is this comprehensiveness of Christ in character, in character, not only in person as God, but in character, that makes him God's horizon for the whole creation, eventually the universal representative. This morning we referred to the Hebrew race as taken out from the nations of this world and begun in Abraham, the Hebrew, or the man from beyond. And we pointed out that God's dealings with that nation were dealings in discipline with Abraham the first, with Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and all the other representatives of that nation.

God's dealings were dealings of deep and drastic discipline with one object in view. To make them and that nation his servant people in this whole order of creation. To be his servant instrument to show what he is like.

To bring him into this world. To make his character known and to establish that character as the governing thing amongst men. Abraham the Hebrew, the man from beyond, was a stranger, a sojourner all the days of his life, a pilgrim.

Someone not only who came from outside, but remained outside all his days. While inside, yet outside always. The race was that, Israel.

Stranger, pilgrim, sojourner, not reckoned, to use Balaam's words, not reckoned among the nations. Not reckoned among the nations. And that was a costly way, way of breaking down all self-importance and self-sufficiency, all arrogance and pride, everything of that kind, despised and rejected it was of Israel in the first place, even if it had prophetic content concerning the Lord Jesus.

Jeremiah cried, See, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, all ye that pass by, by that, the undoing of something, to bring God alone in, the undoing of man, the undoing of all that self-fullness, that complete emptying, the most perilous and disastrous times in the history of that people were when they became something in themselves, with self-sufficiency, superiority, pride. That was the day of their disaster, whether it be in their representative kings, leaders, or ultimately in themselves. Now, that's a repetition.

Keep hold of it, because it leads us to Christ. Christ is the sum, the sum of all the discipline and purpose of discipline in Israel. He was of the seed of Abraham.

He belonged by birth and genealogy to that race. No contradiction to what we have said about his being above the race. He came into it, and coming into it, he took up in himself all that purpose of God for servanthood along the line of discipline.

I wonder if you have seen that the life of the Lord Jesus from beginning to end was a life of discipline, deep and terrible discipline. He touched the deepest note in that aspect of human weakness, and he said, the son can do nothing of himself. What a contradiction and contrast to human nature as we know it.

He said, I can, I can do it, I will do it. I'm good for that. That is the pride of man.

That is the ambition of man, to be able to do it, to be it. In God's own son, there is this tremendous negativity of all that. Even the son, even the son can do nothing of himself.

With a repetition, in order that you may really grasp this, Jesus is the son of all that purpose of God through discipline that we see in history from beginning to end. With that, let us break it up. It has many parts.

Perhaps we shall only touch on one or two this afternoon. See the object, what God is doing in this discipline, in Israel, and then in its consummate form, in his son, in Jesus. What is it? To make the servant.

Produce the servant. To constitute servanthood. Servanthood.

Look then at his beginnings. At his beginnings in this world, on this earth. See the principle taken up in wrought, in his very birth.

Take his mother. We are on very delicate ground, very delicate ground indeed, when we speak about the mother of Jesus, for more than one reason. A virgin, says the scripture, shall conceive, bring forth a son, an angel to the Lord, appeared unto a virgin Mary.

In our times of low standards, low standards of morality, when these franknesses and sensibilities are so lowered, degraded, it may not be easy for us to understand, really understand what that meant to Mary. Do you see that she was immediately confronted with a social stigma? A social stigma. To try to evade that, Joseph took it away.

A secret social stigma. Do you see her personal dilemma? If she was pure, unsullied in mind, in heart, cherished as any true noble woman ought to, that unsullied state of mind and heart, what a dilemma for her to be found in that state. And then, what a religious predicament, for, mark you, from the standpoint of the law of Moses and the Jewish rulers, this, this is visited with stoning and death.

This child bearing out of wedlock is culpable, is criminal, in Islam. You remember, the Jewish rulers brought a woman to Jesus on one occasion, taken in adultery, and they said, according to Moses, she ought to be stoned. Here is the religious predicament.

And she had to face all that, alone in the secret of her heart, and come to a decision. What a costly way. I am no Romanist, no place for the worship of the Virgin Mary.

Maybe we have lost something, something, by our fear of death. At any rate, I suggest this to you, as something in Israel. By which way Jesus was to come into this world, which was a deep, a tremendous, and almost terrible renunciation, self-emptying, no grander thing to come from human lips, in the light of all that, than, behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me, according to thy will.

Is that the servant spirit? Is that the spirit of self-emptiness? Self-abasement? Of utter surrender? Submission? Humbly? Humbly? Surely it is. That was the vessel and the vehicle, with that character, through which Jesus came into this world. On that principle.

What was true there? What was true there, was a governing principle for the rest of his life. This is called, ecclesiastically, the Annunciation. Maybe that.

I prefer to call it the Renunciation. Where she was concerned. Letting go.

Giving up. Everything might be cherished, from this world's standpoint. To accept something divine.

Something heavenly. What a perception! What a vision! What a seeing through! All this earthly, human, to the divine. Jesus takes that up, from his very birth.

Look again at the circumstances of his birth. He is the Lord of Glory. That's a scriptural title.

The Lord of Glory. Again, he is the Lord of Life. The Prince of Life.

He is the Eternal Son of God. Who could say this very truth? Father, glorify thy Son. Glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Again, it can be written of him who subsisted in the image of God. Equal with God. All that.

And no place in the inn. No palace. No house.

No home. No bed. No nurse.

No attendants. How true are the words, he emptied himself. What an emptying.

What an emptying. That's it. Emptying.

God, in this discipline, is emptying. This one would never be able to say, I was born of distinguished parents. I was born into and brought up in a palace.

A noble home. No. Nothing of that.

He emptied himself. And took upon him the form of a bonds. Here we are.

Right back at this. Discipline to get the servant spirit. Something of such price and value to God.

Something that has got to fill the whole universe. In the end, that. And his servants shall what? Be waited on, of course.

No. Shall serve him. Shall serve him.

And for the present, the last, the thirty years. The thirty years. It is the undisguised disappointment of Christendom that we have so little knowledge of those thirty years.

How many people have tried to build up something to fill in that time and explain? Why those silent years with only one very brief break at the age of twelve. Disappearing again from twelve to thirty into hiddenness and silence. Thirty years.

The period in which every boy and every young man acquires his ability, his qualifications for life. For life's ambition. Period of training that will give a place in this world when it is completed.

Some kind of equipment and qualification to take a worthy place amongst the people of repute in this world. That's the thirty years. You haven't got something like that when you're thirty and you'll have to get very busy to try and get it.

But finally, that's the period. That's the period. Out of which you will come with either your degrees, your diplomas, your abilities, your training.

For him, silence. For him, no such things. As far as we know by his afterlife, silence and hiddenness.

What's happening? What is happening? Can we, can we tell? From the greater context, it's all in keeping with the abiding principle of God, the discipline, the discipline of the negative. Is there any greater discipline in your life, dear friend, and nothing happening? That suspense and waiting. God seeming to be doing nothing.

Nothing about that agony. Going alongside of a consciousness that God surely meant something better than this. God had a greater purpose in life than this.

I say that's discipline. Is it? Yes, the discipline of everything that is true about our humanity. I don't call a person a normal human being who has no concern about their life.

No concern to be worthwhile and do something worthwhile. That's not a man. That's not a true human being.

But for God to stay for a drawn-out period. Keep everything in suspense, waiting. Day in, day out, the awful monotony.

Keep everything in suspense, waiting. Day in, day out, the awful monotony. Man has many, many times revolted.

The Old Testament speaks about those who revolted because they had no changes. We must have some changes. Monotony is an awful affliction, isn't it? Well, thirty years waiting like that.

What is God doing? If this is not emptying of self, I don't know what is. If this is not to inculcate an absolute subjection, submission to God, understanding or not understanding, the deepest perplexity and bewilderment, active in spirit, never passive and careless, active in spirit and yet, and yet, God not bringing out His purposes to clear light. That's suffering for the soul, submission, servant spirit, to become the very nature and constitution of thing.

Well, it was true of him and if we want the confirmation that it was true in his case, we look into our own spiritual history. The infinite agony of long drawn out suspense and inaction and waiting and patience. What a large place patience is given.

Even at the end of the Bible, the patience of Jesus Christ is the mark of the saintly soul. We know this is true. But to have the explanation, the explanation.

There is on the one side what you may call, if you like, the negative, but God knows it's a very positive kind of negative this. It's an agonizing negative. The emptying, the weakening, the helplessness.

There's the other side. The will of God, preeminent, absolutely dominant, surrender to. That is what heaven is going to be made of.

That is what the ages to come are going to display. When God is all and in all. That's not just something in the Bible.

That is the disruption of the human soul to get there. Jesus came out of his 30 years with nothing. No academic distinction.

No status or references from men. He rather came out with many handicaps. Jesus of Nazareth.

Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Was a byword, a slogan for the handicapped. To any young man, 30 years of age, step into his life work. He has handicaps.

Well, has this helped you to see that Jesus did take over all the historic discipline of God in Israel to make Israel his servant? And that the greatest tragedy in history is that at last Israel broke away from that and sought to take the power into its own hands and repudiate the Son of God. Put itself outside of the horizon of God. Outer darkness.

I'm not going to try to explain or argue what the Lord Jesus meant by that. Outer darkness there shall be weeping and wailing, gnashing of teeth and this for the sons of the kingdom, but I can clearly see that during the past 2,000 years that's been Israel's lot. Weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth.

Outside of the horizon of God. In darkness. Outside darkness.

What a challenge and an appeal to us, dear friends. What a challenge. Perhaps an interpretation.

God's dealings with us. It all comes back to this. God takes these pains, infinite pains with us.

Breaking, emptying, humbling, weakening. Taking away our own ability to do and accomplish and attain in order to bring us to the place where His will is preeminent and in the doing of His will He can show Himself to the world, to men. It's through people like this you never see the Lord Jesus in the arrogant, bombastic, self-assertive, self-sufficient kind of people who can do it.

Forcing themselves always into position and assuming something that God has never given to them. A position. That's not the Lord Jesus.

He made Himself of no reputation. There is God's end. It's very practical.

It's very real. Shoes. Of course there are a lot of Christians who won't have it.

When you go to the seaside you see three kinds of people. People who keep to the dry land to the shore and have a nice happy little time building their sandcastles and what not. Very happy.

Another class who take off their shoes and go into the shallows and paddle. If per adventure, by accident, a wave should catch them above the ankles or to the knees, well, they're soon out, back on the dry land. They're not having any of that.

Enjoying themselves in the shallows and they won't accept anything else. There's a third class who strip and go right in and out and soon begin to realize that they are having to cope with forces that are more than human forces. The further out they go, the more their resources of strength and endurance are drained and tanked.

If they get far enough out to the sea, it becomes necessary for them to draw upon resources that are not in themselves at all. A lot of Christians who are going to keep to the dry land and have a happy time and they're not going to have anything that interferes with their happy, pleasant Christian life. There are those who will just get into the shallows, have a little more, but as soon as things begin to get difficult, they debunk.

They're back again. They're out of it. There are Christians who will plunge into the depths with the Lord and make discoveries of resources beyond their own.

In Christ, maybe there are those classes here this afternoon, but I'm speaking to the third class. You have gone out with the Lord, committed yourself to the Lord, said it's to be all for the Lord. You're in the depths.

Your resources are taxed, perhaps beyond measure and endurance, but it's out there that you're going to make your discoveries. Those discoveries that are going to be the stock and trade for the business of heaven, going to be the resources that are in Christ alone for serving him here and hereafter. This is service.

This is the way of service. This is horizon by Christ himself. He is not only the scope, the sphere, he is the content of it, the nature of what is found within God's horizon.

May we have grace to yield to him, to be conformed to his love.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/1/SID1101.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/the-horizon-of-christ-part-1/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net