

## Jesus is Lord

During January, we'll give careful consideration to the phrase, Jesus is Lord. It's short, and sounds simple—but there's a lot packed into this line. To affirm Jesus as Lord involves making a choice about who one will follow and obey. Those who say this are making a statement of allegiance, and expressing a commitment that affects attitudes, behaviors, preferences, and inclinations. New Testament writers and speakers used the phrase often, encouraging others to live into its implications—as these examples show:

John 21:7  
Acts 9:17

Romans 10:9  
1 Corinthians 8:6

Philippians 2:11  
2 Peter 1:2

In other places (many other places), we find references to the 'Lord Jesus', which is a shorter form of the phrase, but one that accepts what it claims. Here are some examples—and as you read, try inserting a comma between *Lord* and *Jesus*, noticing how that adds a certain emphasis:

Acts 16:31; 20:21  
Romans 1:4, 7; 5:1

1 Corinthians 1:2  
2 Corinthians 1:2

Ephesians 1:17  
2 Thessalonians 1:12

What happens if we say 'Jesus is Lord'—and live like it's true? That question will be at the center of Sunday messages for St. Thomas this month. You can be exploring this further by reading the passages listed above, and then taking time with the sections connected to each week's message as shown below. As you're reading, jot notes as thoughts occur to you; take some notes during the messages, too, and see where those ideas lead.

### *January 10    No other gods*

Exodus 20:1-3; Matthew 6:19-24

What 'other gods' can compete for our attention, interest, and energy?

### *January 17    Love your enemies; encourage one another*

Matthew 5:43-48; Hebrews 10:23-25

If Jesus is Lord, we listen to what He says, and obey the directions He gives. What we often discover, though is that what He wants is not always what we're eager to give or do...

### *January 24    Care for the lost and the least*

Matthew 25:31-46

We notice how often Jesus goes out of His way to notice and interact with those who are easily overlooked. If the 'Lord' behaves like this, what does that suggest for those who follow Him?

### *January 31    Receiving what the Lord gives*

Psalms 23

The Lord blesses those who follow Him—and that generosity inclines His people to be generous.

*A little more...*

Bible scholars point out that in the first century AD, the Roman empire recognized its leader as divine (recovered documents and coins from that period make this clear). The paragraphs below bring this out more fully, and give us a sense that when Christians said, 'Jesus is Lord', they were very clearly disagreeing with the claim that *Caesar* is Lord. By doing this, they were definitely going against the grain—and taking a significant risk. So, when we find *Jesus* and *Lord* together in Scripture, and understand that Christians kept connecting the two words, we realize that these people were serious about their living out their faith.

*Excerpt*

The "kingdom" of God and "gospel" are usually thought of as terms unique to Christianity. And who else but Jesus was called not only "the son of God" but also "Lord" and "Savior"? In fact, say biblical experts, these terms and concepts were already familiar to residents of the Roman Empire who knew them as references to the authority and divinity of the emperors, beginning notably with Caesar Augustus before the dawn of the first century.

Julius Caesar was assassinated on the Ides of March in 44 BC. When a comet was later visible on July nights, Octavius, the adopted son and heir of Julius Caesar, promoted the idea that it was a sign that the divine Caesar was on his way to heaven. When Roman law in 42 BC deified Julius Caesar, the status of Octavius, who took the name Augustus, was strengthened by adding the phrase "son of God." Poets celebrated the divinity associated with Augustus, and across the empire coins, monuments, temples and artwork promoted the cult of Augustus and other emperors who adopted Caesar as an honorific title. To many in the empire, Roman civilization brought stability and wealth. And the people were urged to have "faith" in their "Lord," the emperor, who would preserve peace and increase wealth. "In the Roman imperial world, the 'gospel' was the good news of Caesar's having established peace and security for the world," wrote Richard A. Horsley in *Jesus and Empire*.

John Dart, *The Christian Century* Feb 8, 2005  
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