

Introduction

I'd like to begin asking you a question. Are Donald Trump, Bill Gates, and Dr. Phil competent? Almost everyone would quickly answer, **"Yes, they are."** But the correct answer is, **"It depends."** To be competent to live, you see, we have to be rightly related to Jesus and that's what I'm going to preach about today – from Colossians 2:1-7.

In verse 6, Paul identifies the one who is the focus of his text and our Easter worship today. It's **"Christ Jesus the Lord."** The Bible teaches that Jesus is the second person of God, God the Son. But it also teaches that He became a man and lived a human life on this earth for 33 years. This morning, I'd like to address two issues about Jesus the man.

The Competence of Jesus

The first is His competence. Notice what Paul writes about that in verse 3. It's that **"all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Jesus."** That implies something about Him that all of us desperately need to grasp. He was the smartest person who ever lived.

Few people think of Him that way - as having been smart. That's because the world for the most part opposes intelligence to goodness. An old Russian proverb illustrates just that. It speaks of those who are **"stupid to the point of sanctity."** The meaning is that we have to be really dumb to be really saintly. It's true. The world believes that great intelligence and great goodness are mutually exclusive.

That's why almost no one, including Christians, thinks of Jesus as having been smart. The great Christian poet, Dante, for instance, developed the title *Master of Those who Know*. But he assigned it to Aristotle not Jesus. It's the same way with Christians today. Jesus was so good that we don't think of Him as having been smart.

But He was. The smartest person on earth today is physicist engineer Kim-Ung-Yong, whose measured IQ is 210. That's staggering, 100 points higher than most of ours. Well, Jesus had a higher IQ than

Yong does and was smarter. He was in fact the smartest person who ever has lived or will live. That means two things as a practical matter.

First, He knew more about the universe and life in it than anyone ever has or will. He knew more about physics than Yong does. He knew more about business than Donald Trump does. And He knew more about psychology than Dr. Phil does. He possessed a greater grasp of reality than anyone ever has or will.

Second, Jesus used logic more capably than anyone ever has or will. Good logic is about applying logical relations, like implication and contradiction, to facts and then drawing valid conclusions from them. It's a vital component of smartness. Well, Jesus was the finest logician who ever has lived or will live. Study His teachings in the Gospels and you'll see what I mean.

The bottom line is this. Jesus is the most intelligent and informed person in history. His intellectual greatness is unequalled. Donald Trump, Bill Gates, and Dr. Phil are considered "**people in the know.**" But Jesus is the Master of those who know. He is the most competent person who ever has lived or will live. He was in fact utterly competent.

The Character of Jesus

There's a second issue about Jesus the man that I'd like to address. The first was His competence. The second is His character.

He used one title for Himself more than any other. Can someone tell me what it was? It was "the Son of Man." That title connotes several things, one of which is this. Jesus was the quintessential man. That word, "quintessential" is the best way to describe His humanity. It means "*the essence of something in its purest form*" and He was just that - the essence of humanity in its purest possible form.

I'd explain it this way. Some stores have a section of merchandise that's available at greatly reduced prices. The items in that section often have a tag that says "*as is.*" That's a euphemistic way of saying "*these are damaged goods.*" There's a stain that won't come out, a zipper that

won't zip, a button that won't butt, a moveable part that won't move, and so on. Those items aren't normal in other words.

It's the very same way with human beings. Human beings are the "as is" corner of the universe and I mean all of us. Every person we know and meet and we are flawed: a streak of deception, a passive spirit, a cruel tongue, a damaging temper, a self-serving ego, a lustful habit and on it goes. The truth is we're all "as is." Nobody's normal.

Except Jesus. He was the Son of Man – the Quintessential Man. Think of every positive quality that it's possible for a person to have – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and so on. Jesus had all of those qualities to the greatest possible degree. Think of every negative quality that it's possible for a person to have – jealousy, greed, pride, impatience, meanness, and so on. Jesus had none of those qualities to even the slightest degree. He was normal in other words. He was humanity as God created and intended it to be.

Suppose that you sue a person and get a \$20,000 judgment. But he gives you \$25,000 instead. You ask him why and he replies: "**Because I know you need the extra \$5,000. I'm able to give it and I sincerely want you to have it.**" Or suppose that you contemptuously spit in a person's face. But he doesn't get angry and retaliate. He feels badly for you and blesses you instead.

Imagine something - the quality of the mental, emotional, volitional, and bodily processes of a person who would act and react that way. That's the kind of person Jesus was. He was utterly good.

So, there you have it – the competence and character of Jesus. Simply put, He was utterly smart and utterly good.

Not Going to Jesus

It only makes sense, therefore, that we go to Him for the answers to life. How do I get along with a mother-in-law who doesn't like me? How do I get out of debt and stay that way? How do I quit being so sensitive to criticism? How do I get rid of anger? How do I handle my divorce?

How do I age well? How do I enjoy my work? How do I face death? Where should we go for the answers to those and countless other questions? Where should we go to learn how to live? The answer is a no-brainer. It's **"to Jesus."**

Sadly, most people don't. Going to Him in fact isn't something that would even cross their minds. That's true at two levels.

The first is in their fields of expertise. Let me make what is a startling observation. It's startling at least if we believe what I've said today about Jesus. There is no field of expertise in which interaction with Him and His teachings is part of the required subject matter.

The field of law illustrates what I mean. I went to law school for three years. Not one course was offered then or is offered now about the relevant teachings of Jesus. Offering such a course in fact would be judged absurd. Also, I never once heard a professor even mention Jesus' name let alone refer to His teachings. There's no doubt about it. He and His teachings are considered totally irrelevant to the practice of law.

It isn't just the law, however. It's every field of expertise in our culture today: engineering, psychology, medicine, business, police work, education, and, often, incredibly, Christian ministry itself. No field of expertise makes interaction with Jesus and His teachings a part of its required subject matter.

People don't go to Jesus for answers to life at a second level. It isn't just in their fields of expertise but in their personal lives as well.

I once talked with a Christian mother who was exasperated with her 22 year-old daughter. Her daughter was in and out of relationships with a variety of men and it was ruining her life. The mother of course wanted to direct her away from this destructive pattern and went to Dr. Phil to learn how. She read several of his books and tried to apply what he wrote about that. Let me quickly say I'm not criticizing her for going to Dr. Phil. I'm just observing this. It never crossed her mind to go to Jesus first – or even second for that matter. In her mind, Dr. Phil is a far better authority on how to influence people for good than Jesus is.

But that's typical of people in the issues in life that matter the most to them. Surely, Suze Orman has better to say about finances than Jesus does. Or surely, John Morely has better to say about aging than Jesus does. Or surely, Wayne Dyer has better to say about finding significance than Jesus does. So people go to them but not at all to Him. Where we look for information and strength for living shows in whom we have confidence, which means that the vast majority of people in our culture today have little or no confidence in Jesus.

Going to Jesus

But they should. Remember, He was – and is - utterly competent and good. It only makes sense, therefore, to go to Him first for information and strength for living. So that's what we do. We go to Him first. Thankfully, our text teaches us how. It's by doing two things.

First, we come to know His teachings. Notice the clause in verse 7, **"established in your faith."** The next clause, **"just as you were instructed,"** defines to what the word **"faith"** refers. It's essentially the teachings of Jesus. Paul's saying we need to know them. We know them of course by studying and learning what Jesus says in the Bible.

I studied Matthew 7:1-11, for instance, and learned what He says about influencing people for good. The best way to do that isn't to condemn them (verses 1-5) or to force good things on them (verse 6). It's to ask them in the context of kingdom goodness (verses 7-11). Our best resource for effecting change in people is the power of the request. That's what Jesus says and I learned it by studying this text.

But it isn't enough just to know His teachings. We go to Him by doing a second thing. We come to know Him. The word **"received"** in verse 6 conveys just that. It connotes taking a companion along with us on a journey. In this case, according to verse 6, that companion is Jesus and the journey is life. Paul goes on to say about that in verse 7 that we should be **"rooted"** and **"built up"** in Him. Know Him, in other words.

And we can. That's the good news of Easter. Yes, Jesus died, but

He also arose from the dead and is alive and well today – still utterly competent and utterly good. And we can enter into what He called a friendship with Him. We learn how to be with Him and to engage Him as we live our one life on earth. And as we are with Him and engage Him, He engages us in return and transforms us. He makes us increasingly like Him. Our character continually grows into the image and likeness of His. We come to think, feel, act, and react more and more like Him. Oswald Chambers said it well, **“Jesus’ teaching is for the life He puts in.”** He slowly but surely changes us into the kind of person who is willing and able to do what He says.

That then is how we go to Jesus. He was and is utterly smart. So, we commit ourselves to knowing His teachings. He was and is utterly good. So, we commit ourselves to knowing Him. We are rightly related to Him when do.

Conclusion

And that in turn makes us competent to live. Consider two quick scenarios that make just that point.

A professional psychologist wants to help a patient who fears death or has identity issues or is depressed, and so on. Jesus gave us the best possible information about the human condition, human personality, and human destiny that is available. Can that psychologist, therefore, give his patients the ultimate help they need if he excludes Jesus and that information from his practice? The answer is a resounding **“No.”**

Or consider a father who wants to teach his son about the birds and the bees as we say it. Jesus gave us the best possible information about love and sex that is available. Can that father, therefore, give his son the ultimate help he needs if he excludes Jesus and that information from his teaching? The answer is another resounding **“No.”**

I’d sum it up this way in closing. Jesus was and is utterly smart and good. So rightly relate yourself to Him. Know both His teachings and Him. You’ll be competent to live if you do.