

September 1, 2019
Pentecost12/17
Text: Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (ESV)

The Changeless Christ

Jesus is the Rock of Ages. Rock: No other object in nature is so expressive of changelessness. Perhaps you've heard of Ayers Rock. Located in central Australia, it is the largest single rock on earth. It is 1½ miles long, ¾ a mile wide and 1100 feet high.¹

Over the centuries, it has weathered storm and drought; it has been explored by the curious and feared by the superstitious; it has seen people of every race, creed, and culture come and go. But there it stands, unchanged by time or people, a rock in the midst of the desert and in the center of a continent.

Behold Jesus: A rock in the middle of time and in the center of humanity. The living Christ towers above lifeless Ayers Rock. Though times and peoples change, Jesus doesn't. He is our Savior yesterday, today, and forever. His crucifixion reveals the greatness of his love for us. See how he bleeds for you and me. See how he suffers for you and me. See how he bows his head in death for you and me. Yet, his death is but the prelude to his resurrection ... also for you and me.

When our text says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever," it means that he never changes. He is true God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary. Yes, he is the never-changing God/man. That means that he is eternally omnipotent and omniscient. He is the crucified of Calvary who is also the resurrection and the life. His tomb remains empty for time and eternity.

Think about what this means. He is our helper in every time of need. And with him, nothing is impossible. This means that ...

- anything Jesus has ever done, he can do now.
- anything he has ever done anywhere, he can do here.
- anything he has ever done for anyone, he can do for you."²

I remember when Jim Barnett, a former member, was rushed by ambulance to Harris downtown. I was waiting with his wife Sandy when the attending physician came out and said to her, "I'm sorry, ma'am, but Jim didn't make it." She sobbed. A bit later, we decided to get a cup of coffee and reminisce about Jim's life. Maybe an hour later, we returned to the ER.

One of the nurses hurriedly grabbed Sandy's hand and took her back to Jim's deathbed. What we saw was phenomenal. Jim was not only alive, he was sitting up in his bed and talking! The ER staff hadn't attended to Jim in any way after his death was called. Then suddenly, he's very much alive. This was a miracle! Even the ER staff called it a miracle!

In the second place, when our text says that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, it means that, just as he himself never changes, so also his teachings and promises never change.

The most important promise he made is this: Those who trust in him alone have saving faith, and with it, eternal life. Christ lived a sinless life, and yet God gives us the credit for it. Christ also died for our sins, and yet, God counts Christ's death as though we had died.

But the world scoffs at the idea that sin makes us guilty before God. One pop musician offered his own viewpoint on this subject. He said,

Initially I was drawn into the darker side of life. But it's really just human nature. I started to learn that everything that's considered a sin is what makes you a human being. All the seven deadly sins are man's true nature—to be greedy, to be hateful, to have lust.

Of course you have to control them; but if you're made to feel guilty for being human, then you're going to be trapped in a never-ending sin-and-repent cycle that you can't escape from, and you're going to be miserable. Ultimately, you'll be living in your own hell. So there's no need to worry about going to hell, because hell will be on earth.³

I couldn't disagree more. Sin may be human, but human sin comes only in one color: black. And the blackness of sin merits eternal death.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Perhaps the three most important words ever spoken come from the lips of Jesus when, just before his death, he cried out, **"It is finished!"** (John 19:30).

We go now to the place of Jesus' death, i.e., to the place where our salvation was won. See him now. His temples are dripping with blood from the wounds of a crown. It was exquisitely made with needle-sharp thorns. His face is marred and swollen by rude pummelings. His back is cut to pieces, bleeding and throbbing from being flogged mercilessly. His eyes are heavy and sunken from the distress of a night of sleepless injustices and a half-morning of agonies.

But the agony is only beginning. We take a closer look.

Come now, you Roman executioners, do what you have done countless times before. Lay the cross down on the ground.

Stretch him upon it. Now place his arms, extended, on the crossbeam. Here, take the nails and the mallet. Hear the sound of those hammer blows, one after another, as the nails rip their way through skin and tendon in each hand. See where blood

begins to flow. By all means, you must not let the thought of his sufferings distract you. Now place the feet, one upon the other, and with heavier strokes drive the nail deep into the feet until they are securely fastened to the wood!

Now lift high the cross! Let its bottom slip down into the hole dug to receive it. Let it bottom out with a dull thud, and jerk the body. Ignore the fact that every muscle is wrenched and every nerve is sending forth spikes of surging pain.

Ah yes, for you, the deed is done. And don't let his words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"⁴ bother you. The passage of time will surely bring about the intended result. You can look now, you executioners. Divide his garments among you. You can leave now. But he, who is your Creator, Redeemer, and Judge, must, in the depths of his passion and humiliation, remain on that cross until his work is done.

But hear me now you crucifiers. My heart is broken and I cry out, "O love, how deep, how broad. how high, that moved the Son of God to die."

See, world, what you have done. The only man who never did an evil deed, who never had an evil thought, who never allowed a blemish of sin to touch his soul, is here on Calvary reckoned an evildoer, dying between two thieves.

Look on, you wild rabble. Angels must have sobbed, if tears could be in heaven. And the demons must have filled the catacombs of hell with greater glee than hell had ever known before. Our sins nailed him there.

There are two words that belong together: Crucifixion and resurrection. They belong together because, if there is no crucifixion and death, then the resurrection means nothing. If Christ is crucified but there is no resurrection, his death on the cross means death is the end of all things.

Yes, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Both his crucifixion and resurrection happened. And once done, they are forever done. They are the most important events in history. They stand fixed and immovable, like Ayers Rock.

Speaking of a rock, a ship was wrecked one stormy night off the coast of England. All were drowned except an Irish boy. The waves swept him onto a great rock. In the morning he was rescued. "Son," said one of the rescuers, "didn't you tremble out there on the rock during the night?" "Sure, I trembled," he replied, "but the rock didn't tremble at all!"

So it is that the storms of this life cause us to tremble. But Christ, in whom our faith rests, is the Rock of our salvation. He never trembles and promises us that, come what may, our eternal salvation is rock-solid. Jesus said, "In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 6:33). So then, let the storms howl, let Satan growl. We who stand on the Rock stand eternally secure.

Yes, the will of God will never take you where the grace of God cannot keep you!

Let us rejoice with the psalm writer,

“Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make
a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!”⁵

Let us rejoice in Jesus. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In his saving name:
Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Endnotes

¹Ayers Rock, also called Uluru by the natives, is considered to be the largest individual rock mass, or monolith, in the world. Located in central Australia, the monolith measures about 2.4 km (about 1.5 mi.) long, 1.25km (about ¾ mi) wide, and 348 m (1142 ft) high. Rock paintings made thousands of years ago by Aboriginal artists cover the walls of many caves in Uluru. For more information see <http://www.crystalinks.com/ayersrock.html>.

²Attributed to A. W. Tozer.

³Attributed to Marilyn Manson, see <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2004/february/14825.html>.

⁴Luke 23:34.

⁵See Psalm 95:1.