

Our Lord Jesus Christ is Not Just Some Superstar

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Bible Text: Matthew 26:6-16; John 1:37-51

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It is interesting, the Psalm we read this morning, “Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory.”¹ -- and our brother’s calling out number 214 in the black songbook, *The Crowning Day is Coming By and By*. These two selections that we read and sang this morning are perfectly appropriate to the subject that I wish to speak on, “The Lord of Glory, not Some Superstar.”

We have in our midst and in our community a horrible blasphemy about to occur. Next door to this very church building, in twelve days there will be a performance of the blasphemous and filthy rock opera by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice titled *Jesus Christ, Superstar!* This play or musical, if you will, started out as a record, a double record album in 1970, and was widely denounced amongst believers as blasphemous and an offense to the memory and work and person of the Lord Jesus. But it has continued to be performed and published and republished and re-performed. And now it comes to our little city, and one is perplexed beyond measure to see how it could be that such a wrong thing could happen in a community that prides itself on being so conservative and upright; and that so many respectable people of the community could participate in it.

Perhaps the saddest thing of all: a so-called minister in one of the largest churches in our community, Randy Weeks, is supposed to play the title role of Jesus; and the text, the libretto of what he will be required to say, the words he will be required to utter in the name of Christ, are complete and total blasphemy and an insult to the Lord Jesus. And how anyone who names the name of Christ and claims to love the Savior could portray such a twisted and perverted and false Jesus as this play contains is beyond understanding.

For there are some false views of this play. A lot of people think, “Oh, it is about Jesus. I want to go see that. I love Jesus.” A woman told me that last night. She was keen to go see it, and I told her what the play was about and then she said she didn’t believe she would go see it if that is what it was about.

And just because you slap the name Jesus on something doesn’t mean that it honors the Lord. Too many times in our world things that have the name of Christ upon them and that are thought by lost and wicked men to honor the Savior, in fact dishonor him and put his name to shame.

¹ Psalm 24:10

And then, of course, the other thing about it is, “it is so good for the young people because it introduces them to all these Scriptures in a new and modern musical setting.” But what good is such an introduction if it feeds them, not true Scripture, but lies and falsehoods, as does this production?

And then there is that great rationalization of all the parts that people find offensive. “Well, this is just told from the point of view of Judas. So you’ve got to understand, he was a reprobate, and so you expect him to have sort of a twisted view of things.” So they just sweep all of the falsehoods about Christ under that little convenient carpet of claiming that it is portraying the viewpoint of Judas.

Now if one were going to have a real gospel play, what would be the thrust of the gospel? It would be that the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, came down to this world incarnate in human flesh to offer himself as a sacrifice for sinners on the cross; and that he worked many marvelous works and healings, and taught many glorious truths about what he was here to accomplish, about the righteousness God requires, and that the only hope of the sinner is to trust in him and him alone; and that many people followed him. And because of unbelief or ignorance or malevolence, many people, most people, almost all the people, failed to understand his true purpose. Their eyes were holden, as it were, until after his resurrection. And they came to expect him to perform and fulfill that part of his person as Messiah that was not then to be, but it was held off until his coming again in glory. And they became disillusioned, some of them.

And then wicked Judas, when he saw there was no hope of profit or gain from his affiliation with Christ, sought to cash in and hedge against his losses, and betray him for 30 pieces of silver; but Christ went to the cross as a sacrifice at the hands of wicked men, but God raised him up in power and glory!

That’s the gospel story, if you want to tell what the gospel says.

But what is the gospel play that Webber and Rice, the two people who produced this thing, what is their gospel story? Their gospel story is this. That there is this guy named Jesus who had some powers and special abilities—and they don’t really explain where they came from. He could do a lot of good for people. And he went about doing a lot of good, and he sort of nursed a delusion that he might be the Son of God, but he wasn’t sure. And all the people flocked to him and it got out of control, because their expectations exceeded his ability to perform; and he became frustrated and disillusioned; and he was angry at God, and he started to nurse this martyr’s complex which he blamed on God and which he couldn’t see the point of; and that he became an actual danger to the society because the people were about to make him a king.

And the rulers of the nation saw this with great perception, and Judas came to know this as well -- that what would be best for Jesus would be to have him arrested and taken away, and it would be best for the society, and it would keep the peace. And Judas went to the leaders in patriotic feeling and turned Jesus in. And then Jesus was crucified. Judas

had regret. He thought he did the right thing, but he didn't want to see Jesus suffer. And Jesus dies a pointless death on the cross, and there is no hope. And the whole thing was a pointless display and ended in nothing.

That is the story they want to tell. They don't want to tell the story of what the gospel truth is. And so while a lot of their play does conform to Scripture, it only conforms in the parts that they like, that will advance their false story. And people can go to this play and they will see that 90% of it is a crude, sometimes off-color adaptation of the story of the gospels.

But it is that other part, the part that disagrees with the story that Webber and Rice are trying to push, which doesn't conform to the Scripture, which opposes the Scripture, which repudiates the Scripture.

Listen to what they have to say. Tim Rice, who wrote the words, said this: "Although the gospels seem largely accurate in their telling of the events of the crucifixion, one can see great flaws in their portrayals of both Christ and Judas." He said this in an interview March, 1970, about the time the play was released.

You see, these people have substituted their idea of the character of Judas and of Christ for what the Scriptures plainly say. And the only reason they know there are flaws is because the characters that the Scriptures portray of Jesus and of Judas don't match the story, the false story they want to tell. It matches the true story of the gospels. It doesn't match the false story they want to tell.

So to get their story across, they have to lie about Judas' motives, contradicting what the Scriptures say his motives were. They have to lie about Mary Magdalene. They have to tell a vicious canard against her and lie about the Lord Jesus. They have to lie about what Jesus thought, what Jesus believed, what Jesus said, and what Jesus did. They have to do all of those things to make the gospel story conform to the false story they want to portray. They deny the core message of the gospel to make their musical work and convey what they believe really happened and not what the Scriptures say happened.

There is, first of all, in this production—just to speak in general terms—a disparaging tone against the Savior. There is a triteness. There is a sensationalizing. There is a dishonoring tone about the whole thing. For example, they have Caiaphas saying, "One thing I will say for him. Jesus is cool."

They say of the apostles, that they all come about clamoring to know, "What's the buzz? What's a-happening?" to Jesus.

They have the people around Jerusalem during the Palm Sunday procession of Christ into the city singing these sing-song blasphemous words that go like this.

Hosanna Heysanna
Sanna Sanna Ho Sanna

Hey Sanna Ho Sanna
Hey, J.C., J.C., won't you smile at me?
Sanna Ho Sanna Hey Superstar.

And then they have, at Christ's trial, the people asking him, "What would you say were your big mistakes?"

They have Pilate saying to Christ, "Are you really the King of the Jews? That's what you have been saying to people in your handouts."

So the whole tone of the thing is dismissive, is dishonorable, does not treat the story of Christ and his trip to the cross for his people with any sort of respect or any sort of dignity.

And, you know, it is really interesting, isn't it, that we all are worried in this community now about treating people with respect, aren't we -- not saying ugly things or not "dissing" them. But nobody seems to be speaking out about the disrespect for the Lord Jesus that this entire operation, this entire production signifies. You can say anything about Jesus, can't you, and get away with it.

Where is the outrage amongst believers at this distortion and this crudeness and this dishonor of the one who went to the cross and laid down his life to save his people? The Scriptures say he loved us all to the end.² Where is the sorrow and protest against this dishonoring of the Lord Jesus? How can it be that there are those who claim to be Christians who will tolerate such misconduct against their Lord, those who claim to love him? How can that be?

Well might we adopt the view of the psalmist in Psalm 74:

O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.³

This is the plaint of the people of God. Or, at least, it ought to be.

But I want to go through this production in some detail and describe to you the four categories of falsehoods that are portrayed in this production. First of all, and least important, I would say, is the theological illiteracy that is displayed by the writers of this piece. It is said of Judas that he said to Christ these words,

All your followers are blind,

² See John 13:1

³ Psalm 74:10, 18, 22-23

Too much heaven on their minds.
It was beautiful, but now it is sour.
Yes, it is all gone sour.

Isn't it interesting that the people who wrote this play are so ignorant of the facts in this case that they would accuse Christ's disciples of having "too much heaven" on their minds when, in fact, it was the very opposite? They had too many earthly things on their minds. The Lord Jesus was the one trying to get them to see the importance of being reconciled to God, the importance of trusting in him for eternal life, the importance of being willing to give up the things of this life for that life which is to come. It was Jesus who was preaching the glories of heaven. It was the people who didn't want to receive that teaching. They wanted a kingdom here and now. I think it is interesting that these people have misapprehended the true feelings of the people that followed Jesus, to ascribe to them exactly the opposite of their view of Christ and of what he was proposing.

And then there is a great misunderstanding of the deep yearning and hope of the people that followed after Christ. Webber and Rice portray these people as having the following mentality, that when Christ comes into Jerusalem, the crowds sing that ridiculous little ditty that I mentioned to you. They say, first of all,

"Hey J.C., J.C., won't you smile at me?"

And then they say,

"Hey, J.C., J.C., you're all right by me."

Then they say,

"Hey, J.C., J.C., won't you fight for me?"

And finally,

"Hey, J.C., J.C., won't you die for me?"

The people that were following after Christ, for the most part, had no interest in him dying for them. They wanted him to set up his kingdom. They wanted him to re-establish the throne of David.

What did they really say, as opposed to what Webber and Rice falsely claim they said? "They that went before," in Mark 11 and verse 9, "and they that followed, cried, saying, 'Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.'"⁴

And as John the Apostle wrote:

⁴ Mark 11:9-10

Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt."⁵

They didn't look on Jesus as some superstar. They certainly didn't treat him with this contempt and disrespect, as if they were "high fiving" him and talking jive talk to him. And they certainly didn't ask him if he would die for them. That was the last thing on their minds. They didn't want a martyr. They wanted a king and they expected a king.

This is real theological and historical illiteracy on the part of the people that have put this particular program together. And this is so from the beginning. As we read in John's gospel chapter one at verse 40, what did Andrew say to his brother Simon? "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."⁶

What did Philip say to Nathaniel? "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."⁷

What did Nathaniel say to the Lord Jesus? He "...answered and saith unto him, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.'"⁸

They knew better, and the Scriptures make it clear they knew better, who Jesus was (although they misapprehended his purpose, his immediate purpose), than the writers who wrote this blasphemous play would give them credit for. They didn't want a trite superstar who would die for them. They looked for the restoration of the throne of David. This was a solemn, religious, historical, scriptural desire that they expressed in following after the Lord Jesus.

Furthermore, to make this false gospel of their play, to make the story work, they have to lie about the motives of Judas Iscariot. They have to falsify his motives. Listen to how they describe his motives. They have Judas saying this, that Jesus, he perceives, is losing touch.

My mind is clearer now, at least all too well
I can see where we will all soon be.
If you strip away the myth from the man
you will see where we all soon will be.
Jesus, you started to believe the things they say of you.
You really do believe this talk of God is true
and all the good you have done will soon get swept away.
You have begun to matter more than the things you say.

Listen, Jesus. Do you care for your race?

⁵ John 12:13-15

⁶ John 1:40

⁷ John 1:45

⁸ John 1:49

Don't you see we must keep our place?
We are occupied. Have you forgotten how put down we are?
I am frightened by the crowd.
For we are getting much too loud
and they will crush us if we go too far.

So, you see, they try to construct this motive that Judas was concerned that the crowd was getting out of control, and they were feeding the delusions that Jesus had about who he was, and that the Romans were going to come in and snuff out this whole thing, and the country was going to be thrown into chaos, and this was just a bad thing. He tries to talk Jesus down, as it were, out of a tree that he has put himself in. This is the motive, the false motive that the writers of this play have created to make their story, their false story stick together, that Judas has such concerns.

This denies the clear scriptural text and relation as to what was Judas Iscariot's motive and what prompted him to it. We read of the incident that pushed, as it were, Judas over the edge into the betrayal of Christ. It was the anointing of Christ for his burial by Mary, Lazarus' sister.

Now Webber and Rice confuse—later on we will talk about it—they confuse this anointing by Mary, the sister of Lazarus who had been raised from the dead. They confuse her with Mary Magdalene. They can't keep their Marys straight.

But what does it say? That they held a supper in Jesus' honor, and that Mary came with a box of very expensive ointment of spikenard, and that she anointed his hair and his feet.

And then it says this in John 12 at verse four:

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.⁹

He held the money for the disciples, and he was stealing from them; and he expressed this concern because he wanted Mary to put this money in the common pot so that he could steal more of it!

And then we go to Matthew's description:

When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, "Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial."¹⁰

⁹ John 12:4-6

¹⁰ Matthew 26:10-12

And then in verse 14:

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,
And said unto them, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto
you?" And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.¹¹

You see, when Judas was rebuked by Christ for criticizing Mary for anointing the Savior, the basis of the rebuke was that he was very soon to be taken out and killed and buried; because he said, "She has anointed me for my burial."¹²

And when Judas, who was a thief, had lost, in this case, a chance to profit from the enterprise, his greed and his avarice led him to conclude that this opportunity was coming to an end -- this whole following Jesus and carrying the money and stealing; and hoping that one day there would be a kingdom, and he would have some power and glory so that he could steal on a larger scale. He saw it was coming to an end. He saw Jesus was serious about going to the cross and dying like he had told them. And he saw that Jesus was commending people who treated him in respect and reverence in preparation for his death and burial.

And so Judas concluded that this whole opportunity to profit for him was coming to a quick end, because Jesus really intended to go to the cross. There wasn't going to be any kingdom. There weren't going to be any riches or honor or power for Judas and for his friends. And from Judas' perspective, there wasn't any profit in following Jesus anymore. There certainly wasn't any profit in following him to death and to the grave. And while others might squander their money catering to Messiah as a martyr or as a sacrifice, not Judas. It was time to cash out, and rescue some hope of financial gain from three wasted years.

And he is the one that solicited the blood money. He is the one that went to them and said, "What will ye give me? What will ye give me?"¹³

Now in this play, they have it all the other way around:

I came because I had to.
I am the one who saw Jesus can't control it like he did before.
Furthermore, I know that Jesus thinks so, too.
Jesus wouldn't mind that I was here with you.
I have no thought at all about my own reward.
I really didn't come here for my own accord.
I don't want your blood money.
I don't need your blood money.

Annas says:

¹¹ Matthew 26:14-15

¹² See Matthew 26:12

¹³ Matthew 26:15

But you might as well take it. We think that you should.

Caiaphas says:

Think of the things you could do with that money.
Choose any charity. Give to the poor.
We have noted your motives.
We have noted your feelings.
This isn't blood money.
It is a fee, nothing more.

Do you see? They have placed in Judas' heart, in his mouth, motives and words that directly contradict what the Scripture says: that he did it out of greed for money. And when he saw that his position and his ability to make money by stealing from Jesus and the disciples were coming to an end with Christ's death, he cashed out at the last minute to rescue his three wasted years, and at least show some profit for the time he had spent. That was the real motive of Judas to betray Christ.

And so, you see, it is a lie when people say this play is written from Judas' perspective. It is not written from his perspective. The Bible tells us what Judas' perspective was. This play is written from the perspective of Webber and Rice, that denies the clear gospel message of what Christ came to accomplish, and the greedy and traitorous reasons or purposes of Judas when he came to face Jesus' true purpose head on.

But to give the play a love interest, as it were, Webber and Rice slander both the Lord Jesus and Mary Magdalene by accusing her of being a prostitute, implying an improper physical relationship between her and the Lord Jesus.

Listen to what this text in the play says. They have Mary Magdalene saying to Jesus this.

Try not to get worried.
Try not to turn on to problems that upset you.
Oh, don't you know everything is all right?
Yes, everything is fine and we want you to sleep well tonight.
Let the world turn without you tonight.
If we try we'll get by. So forget all about us tonight.
Sleep and I will soothe you, calm you and anoint you,
 myrrh for your hot forehead.
Oh, then you will feel everything is all right.
Yes, everything is fine and it is cool and the ointment is sweet
 for the fire in your head and feet.
Close your eyes. Close your eyes and relax.
Think of nothing tonight.

And then she says in her so-called "love song" towards the Lord Jesus:

I don't know how to love him, what to do, how to move him.
I've been changed, yes really changed in these past few days.
When I've seen myself I seem like someone else.
I don't know how to take this. I don't see why he moves me.
He's a man. He's just a man.
And I've had so many men before.
In very many ways he's just one more.
Should I bring him down?
Should I scream and shout?
Should I speak of love, let my feelings out?
I never thought I'd come to this. What's it all about?
I want him so. I love him so.

So, you see, there is the implication that she was a prostitute and that she has some inappropriate physical attachment to the Lord Jesus.

And to add insult to injury in this false portrayal of Mary Magdalene and Christ, it is Judas who rebukes the Lord Jesus for this improper relationship! He says this.

It seems to me a strange thing, mystifying
that a man like you can waste his time on women of her kind.
Yes, I can understand that she amuses.
But to let her stroke you, kiss your hair.
It is hardly in your line.
It is not that I object to her profession,
but she doesn't fit in well with what you teach and say.
It doesn't help us if you are inconsistent.
They only need a small excuse to put us away.

You see, he rebukes the Lord Jesus not on moral grounds, but because he is not behaving in a way that is good P.R. And if it got out, it would discredit his cause and Judas' cause, as it were.

And so Webber and Rice, in their blasphemous play, lie about Mary Magdalene. They accuse her of a sin that nowhere is there any evidence she was ever accused of or ever committed.

In Luke's gospel the eighth chapter at verse one:

And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, ...¹⁴

¹⁴ Luke 8:1-2

This is the true nature of Mary Magdalene. She followed Christ because he had healed her of demon possession. And nowhere was there ever any charge that she had been a prostitute and nowhere was there ever any evidence that she had had an improper relationship with the Lord Jesus.

But, you see, it doesn't bother the writers of this play to commit slander against a good woman who loved the Savior and followed after him, who was given the privilege of being the first to witness his resurrection. It doesn't bother them to slander her or tell lies about her. It doesn't bother them that they violated the Ninth Commandment against bearing false witness. No, they will tell a lie. They will distort the Scriptures to advance their false gospel play.

Then, of course, worse than their slander of Mary Magdalene is their slander of the Lord Jesus, that he had some improper physical relationship. What do the Scriptures say? They say that he knew no sin.¹⁵ He did no sin. In him is no sin.¹⁶ Jesus himself, before all of his enemies, cried out, "Who convicteth me of sin?"¹⁷

There is nowhere recorded in the Scripture any example of the Lord Jesus ever sinning or behaving in an improper manner. But that doesn't stop Webber and Rice from imputing to the Lord Jesus sinful and inconsistent conduct. To carry forth their gospel play, they are willing to slander a good woman and lie about her character, and falsely accuse the Lord Jesus of impropriety and inconsistency.

But most blasphemous of all, Webber and Rice place lies in Jesus' mouth about his feelings and about his motives, about his intentions.

Why is this? Why would they do this? Again, because they don't like the story the gospel Scriptures tell, the story of a Redeemer, of a sacrifice, of a substitute, of a Lamb of God sent to be a sacrifice. They don't like that story. They want to tell the story of futility and death and loss and hopelessness and despair. And so in order to tell that story they have to change the truth about Jesus.

It is not surprising, really, because Webber and Rice both, at the time this play was released, denied the deity of Christ and claimed he was just another man. In *Time* magazine November 9, 1970, Webber and Rice, it says, shared Judas' doubts. "It happens," says Rice, "that we don't see Christ as God, but as simply the right man at the right time in the right place. It is a great and inspiring story, though."

In the interview they sent out with the original records to the radio stations, Tim Rice was asked about whether the lyrics were negative about religion. He said, "No -- in a way it is neither positive or negative. It is just asking questions. The fact that an awful lot happened in Christ's life that could easily be legend, I don't think diminishes the

¹⁵ See 2 Corinthians 5:21

¹⁶ See 1 John 3:5

¹⁷ See John 8:46

importance of the legend. But I think as the years roll on in the 20th and the 21st centuries, I think less and less people are going to think of Christ as a God and I think more people are going to see him as a generally good thing. I don't see him as a God at all. And the opera doesn't categorically say he wasn't, but I think it leaves the question very open."

Tim Rice said the following. "I regard Christ as a man, placing him on a human level."

Webber, quoted in the *Rolling Stone* December 2, 1970, said, "I personally don't think that Jesus is God."

So it is not hard to see why they had to change the truth of the gospel message, because they believe it is a falsehood. They don't believe what the gospel Scriptures teach about the Lord Jesus being God of very God, and coming to be a sacrifice to save his people. They don't believe that, so they are free, then, to reject this truth of the Scripture and to substitute their own lie.

First of all, they describe the Lord Jesus as refusing to tell his people about upcoming events, and that he wasn't clear about what would happen himself. This is what they have Jesus saying to his disciples:

Don't you mind about the future.
Don't you try to think ahead.
Save tomorrow for tomorrow. Think about today instead.
I could give you facts and figures.
I could give you plans and forecasts even tell you where I am going.
Why should you want to know?
Why are you obsessed with fighting times and fates you can't defy?
If you knew the path we are riding, you would understand it less than I.

You see, it's like Jesus doesn't really know, isn't really sure where he is going and he sure knows there is no point in telling them, because they wouldn't understand it as well as he understood it. They accused Jesus of refusing to tell his people about what was going to happen. And yet the gospel texts are full of discourses and sermons and teachings about the kingdom of heaven; the Olivet Discourse lays out the future in prophetic terms; his plain teaching about the fact he was going to Jerusalem to be offered up for his people and to be raised from the dead. He was very open with them about things in the future and about his purpose.

The fact that they didn't understand and didn't believe him is beside the point. But he didn't treat them with contempt and refuse to tell them anything about what was coming up. And he certainly had no doubt in his mind as to what the end would be or what the future would hold, as these two men falsely suggest that he did.

And then there is an example of him falsely accusing his disciples of not caring about him, of engaging in sort of a self-pity party. They have Jesus saying this:

“There’s not a man among you who knows or cares if I come or go.”

The disciples cry out:

“No, you’re wrong. You’re very wrong. How can you say that?”

Jesus says:

“No, not one, not one of you.
You’ll be lost and you’ll be sorry when I’m gone.”

What a pathetic, pitiful, whining Jesus these two men have portrayed quite falsely in their production!

And then they have Jesus preaching Nihilism and death as the solution to all the problems of life. In their song about Jesus weeping over Jerusalem they have Jesus saying this:

While you live your troubles are many, poor Jerusalem.
To conquer death you only have to die.
You only have to die.

But what did Jesus really say to the people of Jerusalem? He said to them that their problems would be solved if they would come to him and trust in him. He cried out to them to receive him and to believe on him. He told them he would have gathered them together under his wings, but they wouldn’t come. How often did Jesus say to his disciples words to the effect, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”?¹⁸ How often did he promise to his people, “He that believeth on me shall have everlasting life”?¹⁹ How often did he say that following after Christ and obeying him and trusting him were the path to life everlasting?²⁰ He didn’t preach any form of Nihilism, or that the solution to life’s problems lie in death and the grave.

But then they described Jesus as having a cruel, unwillingness to heal the lepers. Listen to what the lepers cry out to him. The lepers says to him:

See my eyes? I can hardly see.
See my stand? I can hardly walk.
I believe you can make me whole.
See my tongue? I can hardly talk.
See my skin? I’m a mass of blood.
See my legs? I can hardly stand.
I believe you could make me whole.
See my purse? I’m a poor, poor man.

¹⁸ Matthew 11:28

¹⁹ See John 6:47

²⁰ See Luke 18:29,30

Will you touch? Will you mend me, Christ?
Won't you touch? Will you heal me, Christ?
Will you kiss? You can cure me Christ.

And then they have Jesus saying back to them in a cruel reply:

There's too many of you. Don't push me.
There's too little of me. Don't crowd me.
Heal yourselves.

What blasphemous words to put in Christ's mouth! You remember that incident where the leper came to Jesus and he said, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."²¹

What did Jesus say back? "I will. Be thou clean."²²

He never turned away anybody that came to him in faith. The Scriptures say as many as came to him he healed every one. And he never turns away a sinner who comes to him believing and trusting that he has a mighty power to save.

But, you see, the truth about Jesus' eagerness and willingness to save the lost and to heal the sick and the willingness to heal and to forgive the sins of as many as call on him, that truth doesn't fit into the false gospel that Webber and Rice want to promote in their play. So they put false words in Jesus' mouth and impugn his compassion and his willingness to save and to heal those who come to him.

And then there is their putting in Christ's mouth a false proclamation that it is all over, that the end is come, and that Peter ought to go back to fishing. What do they say that Jesus said to Peter?

Put away your sword.
Don't you know it's all over?
It was nice but now it's gone.
Why are you obsessed with fighting?
Stick to fishing from now on.

The Lord Jesus never told Peter to go back to fishing. He told Peter that he would make him a fisher of men.²³ And when the disciples did go fishing after Jesus was raised from the dead, he showed Peter the futility of going back, that he could never go back to fishing. He wasn't good at it anymore, and the Lord Jesus had better and more important things for him to do in his service towards the Savior.

He never proclaimed to anybody that it was all over, it was all lost, go back to what you used to do before you met the Savior.

²¹ Matthew 8:2; Mark 1:40; Luke 5:12

²² Matthew 8:3; Mark 1:41; Luke 5:13

²³ See Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17

And then they put into Jesus' mouth the false words portraying him as confused before Pilate. They have Jesus saying to Pilate:

I have got no kingdom in this world.
I am through, through, through.
There may be a kingdom for me somewhere if I only knew.

How horrible it is that they have portrayed Christ as ignorant, when the Scriptures say that for the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame and is now set down at the right hand of the majesty on high.²⁴ He didn't think it was over for him at all! And he knew he had a glorious kingdom, and he knew he would save his people. And it was that sure knowledge that Christ had that sustained him in the dark hour.

But they would put false words in his lips to make him despairing and hopeless and ignorant and unknowing.

Then they portrayed the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane as angry at God and as confused and unaware, completely unaware of why it was he had to go to Calvary. And I have to say to you, that these are the hardest words to read, false words they foisted upon the Lord Jesus:

I've changed.
I'm not as sure as when we started.

They have Jesus saying to his Father:

Then I was inspired, but now I am sad and tired.
Listen. Surely, I've exceeded expectations, tried for three years.
Seems like 30.
Could you ask as much from any other man?
But if I die, see the saga through, and do the things you ask of me?
Let them hate me, hit me, hurt me, nail me to their tree.
I want to know. I want to know, my God.
I want to see why I should die?
Would I be more noticed than I was ever before?
Would the things I have said and done matter anymore?
I would have to know. I would have to know.
I would have to see if I die what will be my reward?
I would have to know. I would have to know, my Lord, why should I die.
Can you show me now that I would not be killed in vain?
Show me just a little of your omnipresent brain.
Show me there is a reason for your wanting me to die.
You're far too keen on where and how, and not so hot on why.
All right. I'll die.

²⁴ See Hebrews 12:2

Just watch me die.
See how I die.
Then I was inspired.
Now I am sad and tired.
After all I've tried for three years, seems like 90.
Why, then, am I scared to finish what I started?
What you started. I didn't start it.
God, thy will is hard, but you hold every card.
I'll drink your cup of poison. Nail me to the cross and break me.
Bleed me. Beat me. Kill me.
Take me now before I change my mind.

The true beliefs of Christ and his words are ripped out of his mouth and replaced with lies and calumnies and slanders in this vicious play!

But the Lord Jesus always knew why he was going to the cross. He knew it was to bear our sins and God's wrath against us. The holy one who knew no sin, God made him sin for us.²⁵

Webber and Rice deny the clear and unambiguous gospel message of Christ.

As to the true nature of his death at Calvary, let's read some texts to show us what the Scriptures say and what the gospel says, and not the lies they would put in his mouth.

In Matthew 20 at verse 28, "Even as the Son of man came," Jesus said, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."²⁶

In John chapter 10 Jesus said to his disciples:

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.²⁷

And then in Matthew's gospel the 16th chapter Jesus saith unto his disciples:

"But whom say ye that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath

²⁵ See 2 Corinthians 5:21

²⁶ Matthew 20:28

²⁷ John 10:14-18

not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”²⁸

And then it says in verse 21:

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” But he turned, and said unto Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”²⁹

And then in John’s gospel the 12th chapter:

And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”³⁰

And then he goes on to say:

“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.” Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, “An angel spake to him.” Jesus answered and said, “This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” This he said, signifying what death he should die.³¹

And then in Luke’s gospel the 24th chapter, after he was raised:

And he said unto them, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms,

²⁸ Matthew 16:15-18

²⁹ Matthew 16:21-23

³⁰ John 12:20-24

³¹ John 12:27-33

concerning me.” Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”³²

You see, there wasn't any question that Jesus knew what was the purpose of his death, and that he set his face like flint to go to Jerusalem to receive it, that he might redeem his people—you and I and as many as call upon him, put our trust in him.

But Webber and Rice have taken the beautiful gospel of salvation by the blood of Jesus, and they have changed it into a false gospel of malevolence, futility and despair by lying about Judas, lying about Mary Magdalene and lying about the Lord Jesus. They follow after the train of those who mock the Lord Jesus:

And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, “Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?” And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.³³

This is the sad conclusion to the content and structure and meaning of this blasphemous production, that lies about the Savior and denies the clear teaching of Scripture. But, you know, it is inconceivable, isn't it, that believers, that those who claim to love the Lord Jesus, could have any part in such a production, that they could participate in any way, that they could bear to even see the production or hear the music or hear the words. It is a pain and a disgrace even to have to contemplate them. How could they have anything to do with such blasphemy against someone who has died for them and who has saved them?

But, you know, there are warnings in the Scripture against taking the Lord's name in vain. In Exodus 20, what is that commandment? “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”³⁴ There is a price to pay for blaspheming the Lord Jesus and taking his name in vain, and using him as a figure in a play, in assigning to him all sorts of lies and false motives and false actions. There is a price to pay.

In the Old Testament, the penalty for blaspheming against God was that they be taken out and stoned to death.³⁵ So much does God hate the sin of blasphemy.

It was foretold by the apostle Paul that these kinds of things would come about. In 2 Timothy chapter three:

³² Luke 24:44-47

³³ Luke 22:63-65

³⁴ Exodus 20:7

³⁵ See Leviticus 24:16

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.³⁶

“But they shall proceed no further,” the apostle promises, “for their folly shall be manifest unto all men.”³⁷

And then there is that warning told by Jude. He gives guidance unto the churches, doesn't he, that they must:

Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ...Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities... But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves... But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.³⁸

The Scriptures warn in the New Testament most seriously against people despising the Lord Jesus, despising his gospel, despising his death at Calvary. What did the apostle Peter say in his great Pentecost sermon? That God has raised up Jesus and that he has promised that he would sit by his right hand until he has made his enemies his footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.³⁹

And the gravity of it is that you had better decide quickly what you are going to do with the risen Lord, because he is the King, and he will come in judgment to all who have offended, who have spoken hard words against him, unless they repent and believe.

I think of those words that Peter, again, cast into the teeth of the people who had crucified Christ:

³⁶ 2 Timothy 3:1-5

³⁷ 2 Timothy 3:9

³⁸ Jude 3-4, 8, 10, 17-18

³⁹ See Acts 2:34-36

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.⁴⁰

Jesus himself said this, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”⁴¹

And then listen to Paul’s somber warning in Acts 13:

Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.⁴²

There is a promise that the Lord Jesus who has been exalted to all power and glory will have the last say, and those who have despised him and those who have mocked him and those who have repudiated his gracious gospel will be subject to the wrath of the Lamb forever and ever.⁴³

But I think we have a duty to speak out for the gospel, the true gospel, and to defend the honor of the Lord Jesus and his glory. What did Jude say? He said, that we should “earnestly contend for the faith”⁴⁴ that we should bear witness to the truth.

Most interesting, verses 20 through 23 in Jude’s epistle.

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.⁴⁵

There is a commandment that we proclaim the truth about Christ and his gospel to a lost world, even to mockers and despisers -- if peradventure it be possible they might be rescued and redeemed and dragged out of the fires of hell, as it were, by our witness, but more importantly, by the grace of God and the work of the Holy Ghost in their hearts.

Of course, as we do this, if we take a stand against this, we will be called “Bible thumpers” and people will accuse us of being puritanical, narrow minded, wanting to take all the fun out, and taking things too seriously. We need to lighten up, they will say, not take things so seriously.

⁴⁰ Acts 5:30-31

⁴¹ John 3:36

⁴² Acts 13:40-41

⁴³ See Revelation 6:16

⁴⁴ Jude 3

⁴⁵ Jude 20-23

I was reminded of that verse in Hebrews 13, “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”⁴⁶ To be in the place of Christ in this day and in this time is a reproach. It is not cool. It is not accepted to uphold the truth about the Lord Jesus. The world would rather believe the dark, false, malicious, hopeless gospel of *Jesus Christ Superstar* than they would to believe the true gospel of salvation through the Lord Jesus.

We ought to take a stand against such dishonor to the Savior, and uphold the true gospel, to compare to the false gospel that will be preached by people who call themselves Christians right next door to us 12 days from today.

I thought of the words of that song that old Isaac Watts wrote,

I am not ashamed to own my Lord
or to defend his cause,
maintain the honor of his Word,
the glory of his cross.

You know, the Lord’s Table is a great antidote to the false and blasphemous story told by Webber and Rice. They portray Jesus at the Last Supper as holding a big self pitying orgy, in which he makes all sorts of accusations, in which he expresses himself as there being no hope that his life will ever be remembered. And instead of designating the bread and the wine as memorials to his body and blood, he lashes out to them that his life and blood are worth no more to them than this bread and wine. His life and blood might as well just be this bread and wine, that he must be crazy to think that any of them will ever remember him when he is gone. This is the raving lunacy that these two men place on the lips of the Savior.

But, you know, our very being here refutes the calumny by Webber and Rice. The Lord Jesus knew his people would remember him, and exactly why they would remember him, and what it is they would remember about him. What did Jesus say when he instituted the Lord’s Supper?

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”⁴⁷

You see, in Christ’s ordaining this Lord’s Table, he preached the gospel. He proclaimed the reason he was going to Calvary. Our very being here refutes the lies that these men have told about the Savior because he knew we would remember. He laid out what it was he wanted us to remember and our very being here proves Jesus right and Webber and Rice wrong in their assessment of what Jesus thought and what Jesus meant at the Lord’s

⁴⁶ Hebrews 13:13

⁴⁷ Matthew 26:26-28

Table. He knew, clearly, what he was doing -- that he was dying to save his people from their sin and judgment and death -- and he ordained that we would remember, not the lie of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, but the truth. This table and our gathering around it and remembering the Savior puts the lie to the whole sick and miserable story that Webber and Rice have told -- because we do remember our Savior. We do know what he has done for us. And rather than despising him and holding him in contempt, and believing that he was a wasted time and a wasted life, we know the truth. And to us "he is altogether lovely."⁴⁸

And not only so, but we know he is coming again. What did he say? "I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."⁴⁹

This blasphemy, and the truth that we celebrate, and the sure hope that we have, reminds us of that hymn we sang this morning:

Our Lord is now rejected,
and by the world disowned,
by the many still neglected,
but by the few enthroned.
But soon he'll come in glory.
The hour is drawing nigh
when the crowning day is coming, by and by.
Oh, the crowning day is coming,
is coming by and by,
when our Lord shall come in power and glory from on high!
Oh, the glorious sight will gladden each waiting, watchful eye
in the crowning day that's coming by and by!

And this is our word to sinners: Reject the superstar. Receive the Lord of glory as Savior and King.

Let's give thanks for the Lord's Table. Thank you that it puts the lie to the blasphemy these men have written, the lie to the false gospel that our neighbors and members of our community will perform. Here is the truth. Here is the glory. Here is the hope. Here is the promise. Here is the blessing for God's people.

Let's give thanks for the bread, first, that reminds us of his body broken for us.

Oh, God our Father, we thank you that you have provided us with a Lamb for a sacrifice. We thank you that he went to the cross, eyes wide open, knowing who he was and his supreme value, and what it was he was to accomplish, and how he would take away our guiltiness and purge it forever in his blood. And his body was broken and mauled and mangled on the cross by wicked men who mocked him and who didn't believe who he was

⁴⁸ Song of Solomon 5:16

⁴⁹ Matthew 26:29

or what he was doing. But we thank you that there was a body found for your own Son, the Lord Jesus, that you have made him a body that he might be a sacrifice, that he went to the cross in complete obedience and faithfulness, knowing what it was that he was to accomplish.

Lord, we know that his sorrow in the garden was not because he didn't know the point of what he was about to do, but because he knew perfectly well that he would be taking upon himself our guiltiness, that he would be made sin for us, he who knew no sin; and how it grieved him and how sorrowful he was. But he did not withdraw, and he did not disobey, but he went all the way through to the end.

We thank you that he had his heart fixed upon that joy set before him. We thank you that he has entered into his joy and that he loves to have us gathered around this table to remember what he did for us.

Thank you that we have the privilege and the honor of doing so and that we, by our action, prove the power of his death. By our action, by the fact that we are here, we prove the power of his love. And by our being gathered around this table, we disprove all the lies that wicked men have ever told or will tell about him.

For we have remembered him, and we have rejoiced in him, and we still look forward to that day when we will be united with him in glory. And we look forward to that day when all the mouths of the slanderers and the liars and the despisers of Christ will be shut, when every knee bows and every tongue confesses Jesus Christ is Lord to your glory.

Thank you for this bread and for this remembrance. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

And the Scriptures tell us that on the night he was betrayed he took that bread, and he blessed it and he broke it and he said, "Take and eat. This is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me."⁵⁰

And after they had supped the Scriptures tell us that Jesus took the cup, and he blessed it and he said, "Drink ye all of it. This cup is the New Testament in my blood for the remission of sins. As often as ye do it, do it in remembrance of me."⁵¹

And the Scriptures tell us that as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we do preach the Lord's death till he come.⁵²

You know, as I think of those people who despise our Savior, I think of that old hymn writer William Featherston. He wrote:

I love thee because thou hast first loved me

⁵⁰ See 1 Corinthians 11:23-24

⁵¹ See 1 Corinthians 11:25

⁵² See 1 Corinthians 11:26

and purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree.
I love thee for wearing the thorns on thy brow.
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

Let's sing this great hymn, number 332 in the big blue songbook, "My Jesus I love thee. I know thou art mine." Number 332.