

Intro Music: [00:00:09](#) [inaudible].

Josh Mangelson: [00:00:17](#) Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Carla : [00:00:29](#) Hello and welcome to the Project Zion podcast. I'm your host, Carla Long and I am thrilled to be bringing you another episode of God Shots from our Percolating on Faith series where I interviewed two of my favorite people on the planet and not just because they feed me delicious food, although that definitely helps. Charmaine and Tony Chvala-Smith. Hey, you too! Welcome back.

Charmaine: [00:00:53](#) Hey Carla, really good to hear from you and you need to come visit us so we can feed you.

Carla : [00:00:59](#) Uh, amen, sister.

Tony: [00:01:01](#) We've got all kinds of new recipes to try out on you, so.

Carla : [00:01:03](#) I love being your Guinea pig so much. Ah, okay. So today we are continuing down our systematic theology path by talking about dun, dun, dun.... Jesus Christ! I mean, he is actually controversial, isn't he? Like people have a lot of feelings about Jesus, right? I mean, and I am super interested to see where this conversation is going to go, but before we jump into dun, dun, dun, Jesus Christ, uh, let's, um, why don't you talk about like where we are in the series, why we're doing this series, the God Shot part of our Percolating on Faith.

Charmaine: [00:01:41](#) Sure, sure. Well, the reason why we're doing this series is, um, it started last summer when we were at a reunion and where someone, um, was saying, you know, I'm coming to community of Christ. I'm leaving where I had the, the tradition that I had come out of and I, and I'm realizing I can't just switch out one piece of information here and there for another piece of information and that I really need to scratch it all and start over. And I need to have some way of understanding what is the basic Christian view of Jesus and God and creation and humanity and all of those things? And so Tony got the idea, oh, we could do something on, on Christian systematic theology. And so in a systematic theology, what you're doing is you're looking at the components that make up a theology and you're digging deep into them. And so that's what we've been doing over the last, I don't know how many installations and we'll be doing a few more yet, um, is looking at different aspects of Christian faith

and saying, you know, what is it that that has been the evolution of this concept or idea within Christianity?

- Tony: [00:03:09](#) So, yeah, so, you know, systematic theology, as we've said before, is a discipline that has origins in preparation for baptism in the second and third centuries of the church's history, where people coming from a completely different tradition from Judaism or Christianity that is from, you know, Greco Roman religious traditions. Uh, they not, they're religious house not only had to be stripped down to the studs, it has, this does have to be replaced too. In other words, the systematic theology arose as a way to, to help people prepare for baptism into Christianity. And so, uh, as we've said, uh, one of the tools that arose to help people do that was, was, uh, these baptismal confessions, which later became creeds. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of Heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only son and in the Holy Spirit. And so systematic theology is a kind of explication of each of those elements of Christian faith. Uh, so that's, that's where this all came from and we still do it today. In fact, the book that we're working off of Migliore, uh, introduction to Christian theology, Faith Seeking Understanding is a very straightforward and elegantly written systematic theologies. And, uh, so that's, that's how we got started on this journey. And I just realized that I said stripped down to the studs. That may be the only time in any of these podcasts that the word studs has been [laughter].
- Carla : [00:04:42](#) Oh, well, hopefully not the only time. I'll try and slip a little stud in there when I can now that I know that's a goal.
- Charmaine: [00:04:52](#) Yeah. You mean I haven't, yeah, you used it in reference to you Tony? [laughter].
- Tony: [00:04:54](#) Yeah, we laugh!
- Charmaine: [00:04:58](#) Alright, sorry.
- Carla : [00:05:00](#) No, I like this. So this is the chapter on the person and work of Jesus Christ. And um, it seems like this is kind of like, and from what you said earlier this is might be like the linchpin. This is a really, really important chapter. Of course they've all been important, but can we talk about why this chapter is super important?
- Charmaine: [00:05:21](#) Yeah. Um, there's, I mean, what is it that makes Christians Christian, it's what they believe and how they act based on, um, who Jesus is to them or what it is that, um, following him

requires us of them or, or calls them to. And so, who we perceive Jesus to be, uh, what part of the story that has been handed onto us, we highlight. Which pieces we let go deeply into ourselves and shape us or reshape us are really crucial to what it means to be Christian. Um, and we've really appreciated, we've, um, on this journey through a systematic theology, we've been using Migliore's book, Faith Seeking Understanding. And he does an amazing job in this chapter. And in the subsequent chapter as well. Um, the chapter that we'll be looking at next time is going to be on different kinds of Christology in context in our time.

Charmaine: [00:06:39](#)

And so, um, you know, it's looking at an African American Christology and a feminist and womanist theology and, Latin American and Asian Christology. So who Christ is and how we perceive him. Um, and, and what it means to, it's all tied very closely to what it means to be Christian. And one of the things that Migliore is really excellent at, in, especially the beginning of this chapter, is to just acknowledge that a lot of people have a lot of problems with how do we talk about who Jesus is? How do we make sense of it in our time when some of the things from the past, whether it be the creeds, which, you know, in our denomination is, are not, they're not, um, utilized in worship or sacraments, though they're in the background informing us as part of the Christian tradition. Uh, what, what does those creeds mean?

Charmaine: [00:07:43](#)

And, um, what is, what is it that they're pointing to and what do we do with the foreignness of some of the things that are said that don't seem to be common sense in our day? And so how, how do we make something of this person that historians in the last few decades have said, oh, we don't know very much about this person really. And he could be completely different than what the Christian tradition has said. He's just really upfront about all of those questions that, um, cause people to say, well, what can we believe? How do we go about letting Christ be the focus, the lens through which we live our faith in God.

Tony: [00:08:31](#)

So you asked why is this so important? And I mean, we could start with the New Testament. Every single book of the New Testament in some fashion focuses on the person, the identity, the significance of Jesus of Nazareth. And you know, the, the earliest, the earliest thing people said about Jesus who had come to believe in him was that Jesus is Lord. He, they use this politically and religiously charged word *kyrios* to describe who Jesus was for them. And by doing that they were elevating Jesus above Cesar who also like to be called *kyrios*. And they were, they were in some way equating Jesus to the God of Judaism.

And so, um, right at the very start of this thing called Christianity is this confession, this, this proclamation, this belief that somehow in this person, Jesus of Nazareth, people found fulfillment, found deliverance, found hope, found salvation. And so, uh, in Jesus is a, is the heart of it all looking, you know, so, and Jesus, Jesus Christ is like the lens that focuses everything else that Christians, uh, ought or want to believe in practice. Um, Mueller is very clear about that. And also Community of Christ has been very, very clear about that, that, that, uh, we are a Christ centered church.

Tony: [00:10:12](#) That is, that, that Christ, his person, his story, his work, the things he did taught, the things that happened to him, his passion, his crucifixion, resurrection. His presence among us that Christ is, is the, the center of the heart of what we are about. And by the way, um, Joseph Smith Jr way back in, I think it's 1837 or 8 in Far West made a statement about that, that Jesus is, that he was crucified, raised, you know, ascended. That's, that's the essential stuff. And everything else is, is an add on. Um, it's a statement we wish that Joseph Smith Jr had had followed a a little more closely, more often. But nevertheless, right at the heart of our, our movement, both past and present is this deep instinct that Christ is the center of the lens that focuses everything else we do.

Tony: [00:11:10](#) And, uh, a simple way to, to state that is, is that for Christian theology and for Community of Christ theology in particular, Jesus is God's body language. This is, this is how God shows what God is about in wants in the world, in and through this person. Jesus of Nazareth. So Carla, that's, I mean we just offered you a couple of different perspectives on why this is so important. Um, for theology, it's, it's really like the word you use linchpin. It's the, it's the pin that holds everything else together. Without this, without Christology of some kind, everything else simply becomes meaningless and and falls falls off into wayside. So that's kind of how we would respond to that.

Carla : [00:11:57](#) Well that's a lot to take in and a lot to think about. So you know, part of something that you just said about the Joseph Smith jr quote you talked about kind of bothers me and I don't know if we want to go in this direction or not, but there are some churches, different Christian denominations, non denominational and denominational that only focus in on Jesus's death and resurrection. And what I really like about Community of Christ is that we work hard on focusing on Jesus his life. And I mean, I don't know if we want to talk a little bit about that, but like we're doing it right, right? I'm focusing on Jesus's death is, is really just focusing on the afterlife.

Something that, you know, we're not, we don't, we're not good people simply because we want to die and go to heaven. We try to be good people and do good things because that's what Jesus taught us to do.

Charmaine:

[00:12:49](#)

Yeah. And that, and that's one of the things that focusing on his death can, can help us understand. But there's actually other things too that are, that are really positive. But yeah, as a, as a movement, we have traditionally looked more at things like what is the Kingdom of God? What are the, and more recently, uh, with the mission initiatives much more focusing on what was it that Jesus did? Who was it that Jesus reached out to? Recognizing that it was often those who had been trot, downtrodden and rejected and tossed out of the society that Jesus intentionally reached out to. So we've, that fits really much with our idea of doing the, doing part of following Jesus. But I think we have shortchanged ourselves by not focusing very much on, on sometimes the death part because you know, one of the, uh, really powerful images of Jesus' death, um, that can be very helpful, especially today for those who are oppressed is the idea that, that God is willing to meet us in our suffering and that, you know, whatever is on the other side of death that, um, that God is there already for us. And so, you know, I think sometimes we've, um, neglected that side of things too, to our own imbalance sometimes and focus so much on the doing, um, that we've forgot the who that we're doing with and for and who were empowered by

Charmaine:

[00:14:44](#)

So, you know, it's always a balance in all of these things. Um, yeah, some, some Christians focus only on one aspect of who Jesus is. Some maybe only focus on the divinity part and others, uh, only on the human part is that's another way that who, who Jesus is, um, classically understood as in Christianity gets broken down, divided and, um, on underrepresented parts of, of who he is. And what he can mean with us and for us. So I appreciate you noting that. Um cause I think it points to one of our tendencies but also maybe sometimes some of our blind spots on, on Jesus because we've had the tendency, we may have talked about this before in our talk about the trinity, um, to not to say, oh well it doesn't really matter, um, how we understand who Jesus is in relationship to God or um, what, what Jesus, um, what salvation means in light of Jesus, um, life and death and resurrection. So yeah, there's a whole bunch there to explore.

Tony:

[00:16:07](#)

So yeah, that what you're referring to Carla. I, it's a real weakness of, of all kinds of forms of American Christianity. I think, um, this constant focus on, uh, what's sometimes called the substitutionary atonement. It is, uh, in Christology by the

way. We focused on two things. We focused first on the person of Jesus Christ who is this man? And then secondly on the work of Jesus Christ. What is his significance for us, his identity and significance, the two sides of Christology and a lot of American Christianity, especially in an evangelical soar tends to reduce all of this to a divine savior, died for your sins. He took it for you so you didn't have to take it. And if you believe this, you won't have to go to hell. And it's like this is such a complete, uh, uh, distortion and truncation of the Gospel Story. That is the, the person who was crucified? Well, why was he crucified? Um, well he was crucified for lots of reasons, but one is that he was teaching really revolutionary things about the reign of God and about the value of all people. And so, um, in Community of Christ theology and, and Migliore and lots of theologians like Migliore would totally agree with us on this. The death of Jesus is in material if it's not connected to his life, that is the incarnation of God in Christ is something that happens over the whole of Jesus' life. And so God is present in the conception, present in the birth, present in his childhood, present in his teaching and, and ministry. Present when he runs into problems with religious authorities, God is fully present in Christ, in the passion and suffering and, and you know, all of that. And so, um, yeah, I mean it's really important for a, we'll say a full bodied Christology to have the whole Jesus and not just part, not just the part that's on the cross.

- Tony: [00:18:09](#) Um, um, but you know, I resonate completely with what Charmaine is saying about, you know, the, the cross matters for lots and lots of reasons. It's just you can't reduce Christianity simply to that. So yeah. Uh, Community of Christ, the message of God's reign that Jesus came to teach and embody and the way he dealt with the poor and with women and outcast, that's in the central part of the church's message to you can't just ignore that and kind of just focus on that, uh, crucify Jesus. Who Somehow, uh, takes it for you.
- Carla : [00:18:45](#) Well then I guess my next question would be what should we be focusing on? Or if anything, you know, like it seems like there's a lot of these different parts of Jesus. There's a divinity divine part. There's the human part. What, where should we begin when it comes to yeah, and just take it and run with it. Just go.
- Charmaine: [00:19:03](#) Sure. There's lots of places to begin. And one of the places I would, I think is productive to begin is, uh, first with the affirmation that Jesus is God. That what we see of Jesus, whether it's his actions, whether it's his teachings, his, the content of his teachings, whether it's his, um, willingness to die, whether it's his death, whether it's his resurrection, um, that the

really important thing to see is that each of those pieces is revealing something of the nature of God. And this makes, uh, looking at all of these things very rich and that makes all of these aspects of Jesus' windows into what is the nature of God. God is who is God for, uh, what does graciousness coming from God look and feel like? Um, it, it comes in the forgiveness of sins. It comes in the healing. It comes in those who have been rejected being noticed and being forgiven and being loved and being accepted. These are all signs of who God is. And, um, and I think that that's, that's a productive place to begin.

Tony:

[00:20:33](#)

Yeah, I, I totally agree with that. And I, I think that, um, when we say w when we confess that Jesus is God, what we're saying isn't the Community of Christ Christology statement, which is title We Proclaim. Uh, Jesus Christ says this too. We, we align with all Christians who say that Jesus as the word made flesh is both fully human and fully divine. And when we say that Christ is fully divine, um, we're, we're, we're speaking in language that is powerful, symbolic, metaphorical, and trying to capture the same thing that those first disciples were stunned by that in this person that they were following, that the attributes of deity kept coming forward. Um, who is this? That both the wind and the waves obey him. They say in Mark Chapter Four, and you know, as as Jewish, as Jewish guys, when they thought of wind and waves and calming seas and calming waters, who else would they think of? But, but the God of the covenant. And so somehow they were encountering the God of the Covenant in a very personal and direct way in this real human being, which was a stunning mystery and paradox to them.

Tony:

[00:21:49](#)

It's always been a stunning mystery and paradox, um, which makes it appealing, uh, and desirable. Um, so w when we say that, uh, Christ is fully divine, we're saying that, that God's character and attributes are focused for us in and through who Jesus is and what he does. Um, the term God, by the way, can be a totally meaningless term. Um, you can fill it in with all kinds of stuff like who and what is God? Um, you know, sometimes we'll, we'll, with students I'll take out a coin and I'll say, this coin says in God, we trust, you know, which God is talking about. And they still are obviously the Christian God. I say really? How obvious is that? No. Um, how has this coin connected to the story of Jesus in which God is revealed as a god of vulnerability, compassion, mercy, yearning for the loss to come home, yearning for those who are marginalized to be accepted.

Tony:

[00:22:53](#)

How does this, how does the in God, we trust connected all of that with you don't have the story of Jesus. You don't, you don't. You would never connect God to that. And so I think

that's really, really important that we're saying that the things we see Jesus do and hear him teach and the ways he both confronts systems of religious injustice and makes room for those on the edges constantly. That's what God is like. And so that's really important for us to be able to declare. So that's, you know, one place you can go Migliore goes and that same kind of direction too.

Charmaine: [00:23:30](#)

Now, if you asked it again, I might start in a different place because there's there are so many important aspects of who Jesus is. So, you know, there's also the idea that that Jesus is the example of a new humanity, one in which there's this, this level of intimacy with God, um, where it makes that, uh, uh, imaginable that we could have that kind of closeness, kind of, um, relationship with God. Uh, there's the, in this new humanity that Jesus represents. There's this the sense as Tony had mentioned about vulnerability but also the sense of solidarity with sinners and with the oppressed. Um, so that's an a whole, that's another area where even, you know, for people who say, you know, I don't even know what I can do with the idea of Jesus being divine. Um, you know, maybe he was a good person, maybe he was, you know, a profound teacher or wisdom, a person of wisdom or a sage.

Charmaine: [00:24:43](#)

Um, this is a place that, that they can go to is that the idea of Jesus being this forerunner in a new kind of a human relationship with God, uh, uh, another depiction of God's kingdom being lived out in a and a new imaginable way. Um, so, uh, there, there is that piece as well. And, and that, you know, gives us examples, ways to, um, recognize our, our own ego, ego or our own anger towards others. And as we read the story of Jesus or hear the story of Jesus and it's like, oh, that situation that he's facing, oh, I can just, I can just feel my, ire arising here. I, I would want so much to smack them down with words or our fist or whatever. And you know, Jesus' response to it says, says to us, oh my gosh, there's another way. And so, um, you know, that's another place I might start is with, um, Jesus' example of what we, that we can choose a different way, that we can harness the heart and the mind in ways that, um, but God's love, but the idea of God's salvation, um, in our communities, in our cultures, in our families have room as well. So it shapes and reshapes the idea of salvation. So,

Tony: [00:26:34](#)

Salvation is another, uh, big word that gets filled in with all kinds of stuff. But you know, just, we'll just use Matthew's gospel for a second. Um, which is the Gospel in which Jesus is identified as Emanuel. God is with us. Um, how amazing to read that story. Uh, the story of Jesus as Matthew tells it and see that



God is with us, wants to be with us. God wants to be with the poor. God wants to be with the broken. God wants to be with those who've messed up. God wants to be with even those who are represent religious authority, uh, not very well actually to God wants to be with them to be the change agent for them. God wants to be with us in suffering. God wants to be with us in death. God wants you to be with us in hope and in loss of hope.

Tony:

[00:27:25](#)

And so, um, how would we know that other than through the story of the Gospel Stories? So, uh, to me it's, it's very, it's, it's very empowering. Yeah. Especially in the world that we live in now. Uh, so marked by violence and cruelty and hatred, it's really important to know what kind of an ultimate I want to stand on. And um, that the, that the, the grain of the grain of the universe is running in the direction of the God of Jesus Christ, the God who loves the outcast, who reaches out to the broken, who makes space for the needy, um, a God who breaks down borders and barriers and an that's the kind of God that Jesus comes to embody. And uh, it's pretty, pretty revolutionary stuff when you think about it. Uh, so some ways to approach your question, Carla.

Carla :

[00:28:23](#)

Oh Gosh. I, I mean, I can think of about four people off the top of my head who would freak out at the idea of confessing that Jesus Christ is God. That would be really, really difficult for them. And I mean, just the idea that a man who walked this earth is the same as God. So, I mean, I appreciate you giving different, some different kinds of examples as well. Yeah, I mean, for me that doesn't seem like such a revolutionary idea. I'm not sure why and I'm not sure why exactly. It's such a huge deal for other people too. Do you know why?

Charmaine:

[00:29:04](#)

Well, I think some of it is that it seems so counter to all the ways that we live in the world where we believe in things we can see and prove and substantiate, um, where our loyalties need to make sense to us. Uh, what we commit ourselves to needs to have some, um, substantive pieces that we can manipulate and work with. And I, and yeah, I think it's, it's the, the spiritual side of this, the parts that we can't prove the parts that we can't, um, yeah, that we can't absolutely convince, be convinced of. I think in our, in our culture, in our time, um, wanting to have things that are, are sure and absolute, um, is, is not, it's not, it's not unhuman at all. It's, I mean, that's a very human tendency to want to have that. And as times become more, uh, difficult and unsure that the need to believe in things that are more concrete and, um, seeable touchable, um, becomes more important.

- Charmaine: [00:30:38](#) And so the nebulous ideas about who Jesus, this Jesus person was in the past and, and projecting him into the now and saying he is still at work in our midst or that he is God or that God sometimes the question about could Jesus be God, um, people, it's also people struggle with what is God that is revealed there about, you know, is, is there a God who can do things? Is there a God who can intervene in some situations in life? And so that's coupled with, or that's pre the precursor to the questions about Jesus. I don't know. Does that make sense?
- Charmaine: [00:31:31](#) Yeah, that helps me a little bit. I don't know if it helps the other people really have a problem with it but it helps me.
- Tony: [00:31:37](#) I can maybe add a couple of other observations on that cause I've thought about that too a lot. And you know, um, one, one thing is that know like there's an experience side to this that is in order to get the confession, Jesus Christ is God with us. One has to have experienced it as such. And you know, for me it's very real because as I look back over my life, I can think back to when I was around 18 and the, my encounter with Jesus of Nazareth as an 18 year old utterly, completely transformed the direction of my life. And so there's that experiential aspect of it that's really important also, um, to get to get that first of all getting that doesn't mean it's, it's not, this is not, this is not like an Algebra problem.
- Speaker 6: [00:32:31](#) Sorry Carla, I know you love math, but this is, this is not like solving an Algebra problems [laughter] but to get that you have to be deeply, deeply immersed in the New Testament, reading it very carefully and critically and thoughtfully. And then you, you, you come to realize that the language that's being used again and again throughout the New Testament is language is the earliest Christians experience of Christ has risen and present. The only way that they had to describe and express that was they used the language of diety they had gotten from their Hebrew bibles. And so, uh, this,
- Charmaine: [00:33:10](#) This happening really early on.
- New Speaker: [00:33:12](#) Absolutely. And this, this was [inaudible]. They were saying that this is, this is not a less than God. Somehow in this man, we are encountering the fullness of the God we've always known. And so there's, that's, that's a biblical side of this.
- Speaker 6: [00:33:27](#) And another thing is that people have lost kind of the language and grammar of Christian theology and faith in our culture. And so when we say Jesus is God, it's shorthand. We, what we're really saying in terms of Trinitarian theology is that the God is

not like a single dude out there somewhere. And that this dude now just happens to be Jesus. That's not what we're saying. Uh, God is an eternal relationship of reciprocity, the reciprocity of, of the, of three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. And when we say that Jesus Christ is God, technically what we mean is Jesus Christ is God the son incarnate. It's not God the father. He's not God the spirit. And yet the three share in one substance, one essence. There aren't three gods. There's one God. We've dealt with that in other podcasts about the trinity. But, um, so when we say that Jesus is God, we're not saying that somehow there's, there's nothing else left out there.

Speaker 6: [00:34:32](#) We're saying that, uh, God the Word, God the Logos, God the Son, God Eternal Wisdom became flesh and blood in and through this person, Jesus in Nazareth. So in other words, that's part of the language and grammar of our faith that's easily, easily lost in a culture that, that wants to wants more and more, um, religious, uh, religious simplism. That's what Douglas John Hall, the Canadian theologian calls it as a, it's, uh, an unfortunate aspect of our age. We want, we want religion to be, you know, very simple, dry drive up window easy. Uh, I want little slogans that I can manage and so on. And actually that's not what Christian faith offers. We're gonna offer slogans. We offered deep encounter with this Triune reality who is eternally in relationship with us and with in the, in the three person dance called God.

Charmaine: [00:35:33](#) And I don't know if this helps at all. Um, but I think that this is something that Migliore does in this chapter is, you know, as well as he states and names all the, the reasons why people have problems with, um, different aspects of who Jesus is or his claim to be. Um, he also then holds us responsible for looking closely at the long story of Christianity. And, and so one of the things that he does is he, he intentionally respects those who are part of the story before us and honors their experience and their attempts to make relevant in their own time. This concept of Jesus, uh, whether Jesus as a representative of God or Jesus as an example. But he, he doesn't let us be lazy about saying, Oh, Jesus doesn't make sense to me, so I'm just gonna, you know, forget about him or just not lie to him, you know, not deal with him.

Charmaine: [00:36:52](#) Um, but, but what he does do is he helps us to take seriously those who came before us and to listen to them to say, okay, and this time period and the third or fourth century, uh, or the fifth century here was the, here was the debate that was going on about who Jesus is and here what w here's what could be lost or gained in that discussion. Um, here's why it was crucial in

that time period. It may not seem important to us today, but if we want to understand, um, where this understanding of who Jesus is and, and the many, many sides of Jesus, the many, many windows, um, that it provides for us and understanding God's work in the world and, and God. Um, so, uh, I think that's something that I know that in our church for a long time, we didn't have much of, we didn't have much of a, um, respect for those who had come before us, um, before the, you know, establishment of our particular movement or denomination.

Charmaine: [00:38:08](#)

And so that's, uh, another piece, um, that that might be helpful for people who, um, would respond negatively to those kinds of statements is to, you know, um, spend a little time with our, our Christian forebearers, uh, Christian mothers and fathers to see why is it that they said the, that they said, why was it important for them to make these kinds of connections, um, to God or, um, to Christ being eternally present with, with us, um, and, and active in our lives and our sacraments. So that might be a, a doorway say, you know, just because they're way, way back there doesn't mean that, oh, what they had to say can just be dismissed. There might be some things there that, that will be helpful to us in our own struggles to um, understand and connect with Jesus in some ways.

Tony: [00:39:17](#)

Yeah. Migliore makes a great statement. Um, about this on, on, it's on page 174 for those who are interested in checking, but he says, quote, "The Living Jesus Christ is greater than all of our confessions and creeds and he surpasses all of our theological reflection about him." So I think that's really important to hold up to that. Um, when we make certain claims about Jesus, we have to keep in mind always that, that Christ is bigger than our claims. And the Community of Christ Christology statement, uh, says something similar words are never ultimately adequate. Um, and that, uh, we, we don't want our Christology statement to be used to kind of used prescriptively to kind of force a scent to it. There's, there's, there's plenty, there's plenty of room in Jesus's tent, uh, for all kinds of perspectives about him. And so, um, the same, the same person that we're saying is fully defined as also fully human and that person, that part of that, that dimension of Jesus is the one that lots of people actually then resonate towards and connect to.

Charmaine: [00:40:30](#)

Yeah. I'm probably taking it way off of your question, Carla. Um, but I, there's a, there's another little piece and in Migliore's chapter that I thought was really helpful to me, and that is the idea that, you know, as much as he's, he's so open to acknowledging and accepting that there's a lot of uncertainty about Jesus as a historical figure or you know, what was his

nature and his work too, I suppose. But, um, he points out that, that, um, whereas some skepticism is really healthy, he says, complete skepticism about Jesus, um, is dangerous because, I'll see if I can capture what he said, uh, because if we don't have as Christians this sense of who Jesus is and what we're he was about, that's independent of our denominational tradition, then we are solely reliant on our denominational take. Whether it's, whether it's, um, our understanding of our purpose in the world, whether it's our understanding of how we're better than other denominations, uh, whether it's, we think we, uh, we own an understanding of God.

- Charmaine: [00:42:04](#) If we don't have something like Jesus that is independent of our own tradition as a kind of a self checking mechanism where we can say, okay, so yes, yes, our tradition says this and this and this, but are we, are we off base? What will we use as an external checking mechanism to see if our worship of God are trying to live out God's love and, uh, radical hope in the world is accurate or not. And if we say, oh, this Jesus is too confusing and we're not, we're only going to let him be this or this or this. We, we, um, we impoverish ourselves as far as our ability to have correctives within our own denominations and our own theologies. Um, I thought that was a, I mean it describes in some ways, um, our movement at times and other movements that I'm aware of that when we don't have something calling us that's bigger than us, um, that we can look to, we can get lost in our, in ourselves.
- Tony: [00:43:18](#) Yeah, absolutely.
- Carla : [00:43:19](#) That's a really good point. I appreciate that point a lot. Um, when you, you start to like live in a vacuum and
- Charmaine: [00:43:27](#) Right, it's like we don't have a north star by which to determine whether we're on the right journey or not.
- Carla : [00:43:33](#) Amen. So I want to go back to something that you said earlier that just really stuck with me. Um, I don't know if it was you, Tony or you Charmaine, but one of you has talked about how Jesus Christ is God's body language. Uh, and I just really was struck by that idea, especially when I think about the world and what the world is like now. And you know, you turn on CNN or whatever news you choose to listen to or read and it just seems like it's just going to hell in a hand basket that there's violence, and there's nastiness and there's just horrible things happening everywhere. So can we talk about those two maybe ideas that Jesus Christ is God's body language and how do we follow Jesus in this age of violence?

Charmaine: [00:44:20](#) Right, right. Um, there's a little quote from Migliore that says what Jesus does and suffers is that the same time the doing and suffering of God and coming at the identity of Jesus from that perspective, um, puts into sharp relief our, our world's understanding of, um, violence. You know, what was Jesus' response to the violence of his day? Um, it was two fold in some ways. He, um, he tried to undo the violence done to others, um, by bringing, reestablishing individuals humanity that who had been dehumanized by their society, which is a violent act. Um, but as far as choosing to fight violence in its with its own kind, uh, with violence, with violence on the other hand, uh, the same kind of violence and in response he does not do. And you know, this all points to God's way being so much different than what our natural impulse may be. And, um, as human beings are what we're conditioned to respond, how we're conditioned to respond or think about what revenge does or, um, you know, how to fight fire with fire, all those kinds of things that they're, that we're just conditioned to think. Um, Jesus opens up a whole new way of seeing how do we deal with aggression and the various forms of violence?

Tony: [00:46:25](#) So the image of body language. Um, so, uh, I guess we start there by, by saying that, you know, in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God and everything that was made was made through the logos, the word and the word became flesh and dwelt among us. Um, so in other words, this is an to set to refer to Jesus as God's body language is to use incarnational logic. Uh, body language in human experience is kind of interesting. If, if someone says, I really like you while their body is pulling away from you, you know that the words aren't, the words are wrong and the body language is right. Right? And so, um, and yet when we, when we applied this to the gospels and to the Christian story, um, God's body language didn't, Jesus is not to pull away, but to come in, to be with us, to be right there with us too. To let to let a bleeding woman touch the hem of his garment to go and touch dead people and heal them. To be,

Charmaine: [00:47:34](#) Lepers.

Tony: [00:47:34](#) Yeah, lepers. God's body language is to draw near to us and be present in our misery, our finitude, our lostness, our suffering, our, our messed-upness. God wants to be with this and all that. And Jesus shows us that. And so, well, you know, uh, what is our context today? What, what is it that God wants to be showing us today? You know, Charmaine's already mentioned violence. Look, um, our, our context is becoming increasingly violent and

cruel and not just in the United States. It's happening all over the place. And so you, who is Jesus Christ for us in that context where there's violence against women, violence against differently gender people, violence against LGBTQ IA people,

Charmaine: [00:48:31](#)

Different racial groups.

Tony: [00:48:33](#)

Yeah, absolutely. And violence against, for goodness sakes, violence against children and violence against the poor and violence against poor parents and therefore children violence against immigrants, violence against asylum, seekers of violence against the earth, violence against the climate we live.

Tony: [00:48:51](#)

We, we, we're, we're like our, our cultures are now kind of like violence has become so normalized that it's, people have a hard time just calling it wrong anymore. Um, gosh, I was just reading earlier today, um, this, there's a school district in Pennsylvania that sent a letter to a thousand families basically saying, we're going to take your children away from you because you're not providing them enough food because, because you owe on average \$28 to the school district for meals that the kids, you know, kids haven't paid for yet and we were going to, you know, call DHS or something and have your children taken away. It's like you're, you're penalizing poor people or people who have, who struggle with making enough, you know, to, to live on for further, further victimizing them. It's like what kind of a world is that? So that's the culture in which we are called to follow the one who has God's body language and what does God's body language show us in this violent climate that we live in?

Tony: [00:49:58](#)

Um, the embracing of the, other than making space for the other, the breaking down of borders and boundaries. Um, the acceptance of all at the table. I mean, this is why the Jesus story is so important, so absolutely vital to the church. Without this story, we have no way, no, no, a fulcrum by which to, to, to make any change or difference in the world. A world that's violent. Jesus was opposed to violence. Um, Jesus commanded his disciples to be nonviolent. Jesus demonstration in the temple was not an act of violence against people per se, was it? It was, uh, it was a, it was a, what's called a prophetic symbolic act. He was trying to act out what all this was costing people. And, and so, um, this, this gives us a basis then for, for thinking about dealing with and searching for alternatives to a world that has become a washing cruelty.

Tony: [00:51:09](#)

So I think, um, you know, Migliori is really, really good on this and he's, Gosh, the, I think this Christology chapter is worth the price of the whole book for people who haven't, who haven't

got it and want to, um, you know, um, so that Jesus embodies the coming reign of God in which Samaritans and women and lepers and prostitutes and even Roman soldiers are welcome. That's pretty radical stuff. Um, that makes Jesus really actually alter relevant to our context. We want to be careful not, not to write him out of our story because our story will become, uh, much less than it would be without, without him.

- Charmaine: [00:52:02](#) But we have to admit, and I think Christians have through all of the time of the after Christ is that Jesus is disturbing. He does make us uncomfortable, um, whether it's what he did or what he said, um, or our recognition of our reliance on the love of God. And, and our invitation to rely on that, that's all pretty uncomfortable stuff. Um, makes us look inwards at ourselves as well as, uh, at how we are interacting with each other. Uh, where is it that I am tempted to feel superior to others? Um, when you know Christ's action and words, uh, showed us that none of us is better than anyone else in God's eyes. So there, this following Jesus thing is going to be uncomfortable and that's that's a given.
- Tony: [00:53:11](#) Yeah. Just read through the gospels and see how uncomfortable it is for the disciples,
- Charmaine: [00:53:16](#) Guys and girls. Yes, they are women and men.
- Tony: [00:53:19](#) They are constantly messed up with this. It kind of overturns all of their understandings and, and their, their accommodations for their own culture and, and so, yeah, it's, it's pretty interesting to watch the disciples. They, they found following Jesus pretty messy. I think. Yeah.
- Charmaine: [00:53:40](#) And yet that whole idea of Jesus being God's body language, you know, that they're captured by that in some way. There something there that they can't just walk away from. At least his closest disciples, both men and women who, who hung in there through some really difficult times. Um, so it wasn't just his words, it was part of what he represented as another way.
- Tony: [00:54:10](#) Yeah. And you know, uh, Cross and resurrection, God's body language in the cross shows us that God, God is willing to enter into all the most miserable hell's that we human beings can create and show them up for what they are. And Easter Sunday, God's body language and Jesus is that, uh, actually your, your violence isn't going to work, right? Uh, it's the last word. It's not the last word. So, so all this, all this is connected to the person and work of Jesus. Um, Migliore's, each chapter is just so worth reading. It's so rich, but we're, we're giving some highlights and



our own take on things and our own, I guess our own more specifically personal and Community of Christ's takes on it, but lots of, lots of alignment there.

- Carla : [00:54:59](#) Well, it just sounds incredible and you know, it for me, it doesn't happen very often necessarily. When I think about, uh, Jesus being fully human. And fully divine. I don't think about that every single day of my life when it comes to sermon writing I might think of it then, but you know, to think about just to focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ is, Eh, it's expansive and it's big and it's huge. And that you're absolutely right. And I have appreciated this podcast very much to remind me of this man who is God's body language, who walked the earth, who has taught me so much about what it means to be a disciple of his and a disciple of Gods. So that's, it was just an, a really interesting podcast for me. Thank you so much for all of your work on that.
- Charmaine: [00:55:50](#) Oh, you're welcome. It's, these are the points where for us to, you know, we, we get to look more closely and say, oh my goodness, this does matter. You know, and here's the ways that it matters. And it helps us to, to broaden our our vocabulary and how to, how to talk about this. And hopefully to get better and better at speaking to more, more of the needs of people who are wanting to encounter Jesus encounter Christ in some new ways or some deeper ways. Hopefully it helps us to, to get there too.
- Tony: [00:56:33](#) Yeah. I'm, I'm remembering a s a saying right now from one of the desert fathers. Um, I, I love the collected sayings of the desert fathers and mothers, and there's this one Abba, you know, Abbas Annas were kind of the spiritual guru of the Desert Monastics and one of them is named Abba Paul. Very hardly any sayings of his remembered except this one. Abba Paul said, stay close to Jesus. That's it!
- New Speaker: [00:56:59](#) That's it? Thank you Abba Paul. (laughter)
- Charmaine: [00:57:05](#) But t is enough.
- Carla : [00:57:07](#) Yeah. I was just waiting for an "or else". (laughter).
- Tony: [00:57:12](#) There was no "or else!"
- Charmaine: [00:57:14](#) That was one of the great things about many of the, the Abbas and Annas of the desert is that, uh, what got stripped away was the judgemental side, um, as they face their own stuff and they

face their own recognized need for God's love. Uh, quite often judgment of others no longer had any room either. So it's, that's kind of, uh, an interesting thing to think.

- Tony: [00:57:51](#) Yeah, absolutely. So, yeah.
- Carla : [00:57:53](#) Well, I hope that, um, when I am long gone, but what has been stripped away from what I said is the parts that I sound like an idiot (laughter) but now that I'm being recorded all the time. I seriously doubt that's going to happen.
- Charmaine: [00:58:05](#) Oh, I understand!
- Carla : [00:58:06](#) Great. Thank you once again, Tony and surveying for being on the podcast. Um, and you've already talked about what we're going to talking about next time on our God Shots series. Um, the next chapter in Migliore is about the different types of Christology, right?
- Charmaine: [00:58:21](#) It's about how do, how do, how does context our context, um, in our world today, uh, shape our Christology, our, our theology of who Christ is. And, and it'll be really good because it will, um, bring out a different cultures, different experiences bring out different aspects of what we affirm about who, who Jesus is. What it means that he's Christ. Um, and some of it is related to being a people who have been oppressed. Sometimes it is being a people who are immigrants, sometimes un, um, unintended immigrants, uh, whether in slavery or in other kinds of, uh, immigration migrations. So all of those different contexts help to highlight different aspects of who Christ is, has been, can be. So I think it'll be quite interesting.
- Carla : [00:59:37](#) I am too, I'm looking forward to it. Thank you so much for that. Um, so, uh, yeah, so I guess we'll talk to you next time. Thanks again, Tony and Charmaine!
- Tony: [00:59:45](#) Our pleasure.
- Speaker 2: [00:59:46](#) Thanks for listening to Project Zion podcast. Subscribe to our podcast on apple podcast, stitcher, or whatever podcast a streaming service you use. And while you there, give us a five star rating projects. I am podcast is sponsored by Latter-day Seeker Ministries of community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are of those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Latter-day Seeker ministries or Community of Christ. Music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze.

Outro Music: [01:00:49](#) [inaudible].