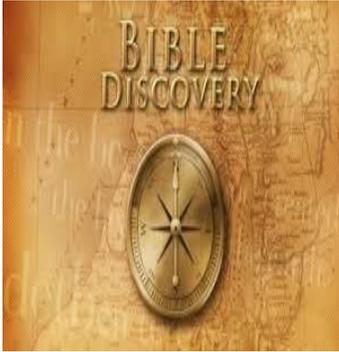


August 2, 2015

Luke 9:18-26

## Who Do You Say I Am?



Jesus asks a very important question to His disciples—and to us. The answer to this question had important implications for their lives—as our answer should have such implications in ours. It's a matter of on what have we built the foundation of our faith, our journey, our lives, as we profess ourselves Christians? Long ago, Jesus asked the disciples, “*Who do the crowds say I am?*” How did they answer Him? They reported what they had heard: “*John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets of long ago*” Just before our passage, Luke records that these were the same things Herod had heard others saying (Luke 9:7-8) because they were the common thoughts of the day. Why? Jesus’ display of power and authority was like no other person people had known in their day yet reminded them of the stories they’d heard passed down from long before. However, many in “*the crowd*” had never encountered Jesus first-hand or experienced personally the encounters of Peter, the paralytic man, or Lazarus. Therefore, rumors spread about who this radical Rabbi might be. But all of these “possibilities” reflected inadequate views, guesses, conjecture of who Jesus really was.

Jesus doesn’t rest with answers to who the masses think He is. He turns the question to the disciples, and to each of us, asking that we search **OUR** hearts, “*But what about you? Who do you say I am?*” Why do you think Jesus asks that question? Whether it’s the disciples who had been with Jesus for some time, or you or me, as we’ve journeyed in our walk with Jesus – perhaps for a short time or for many years having experienced “first-hand” many “encounters” with Jesus, we’ve each a unique perspective of who Jesus is. Your testimony may not include being rescued on the Sea of Galilee from the throes of a storm, having your sight restored or being made to walk again or brought back to physical life but your experiences tell the story of a Jesus who has impacted you in its own unique fashion. Beyond hope, in dire desperation, or simply plodding a course leading nowhere, you were rescued by the coming of your Saviour into your heart and you’ve been set free and lifted up. Therefore Jesus is asking you, from your view of Him, different than the crowd, who do you say that Jesus is?

**Jesus is asking YOU,  
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Him, Who do you say  
that Jesus is?**

If, like Peter, the Apostle, you answer “*The Christ of God*” signifying the long awaited *Messiah*, promised from God, revealing insight into whom Jesus is, you may still be far from correct because of preconceived notions of who the Messiah will be. Tradition for the Jewish people was that He would deliver them and they had determined this would be such as King David of old who slew his tens of thousands of the enemy. They were looking for largely a political and national salvation from the occupying forces of Rome. So then too, are we primarily looking for peace on earth, riches for the poor, an end to slavery, violence, persecution and pain in our world? Are we looking for heaven on earth – this fallen, broken planet occupied by fallen, broken creatures that’ve turned their backs on the love of their creator? Like Peter, and the other disciples, have we much to learn about who the true Messiah is before we can answer who Jesus is? Why did He come, what did He come to do and what has He accomplished through His death and resurrection? How can we trust the gospel to know that it is true? *Did Jesus have to die?*

Listen to Jesus’ own words of His purpose in coming. Like Luke, Matthew tells us,

**“From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”** [Matthew 16:21]

Over in John 12, we hear of a voice confirming Jesus from heaven. As Jesus prepared for His approaching arrest and crucifixion, He confesses, "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 'Father, glorify your name!'" [Vs. 27-28] That is when the voice of God confirms Jesus saying, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." [28b]

Christ's glory at that hour lays the foundation for God's nature and plan involving redemption for human beings and restoration of a fallen creation. It also tells us some important things about God such as He's *personal, loving, transcendent*, and active in His creation; *all-powerful, ever-present*, and *all-knowing*. But without Christ who died on the cross for our sins, rose from the grave, ascending into heaven, there's no Christian faith. Jesus is at the center of the Christian faith. Jesus shows He came to glorify God and so must we.

**Only as our spirits are kindled with the power of the Holy Spirit to ignite our hearts in accord with the God of the Universe, can we grow in understanding of who Jesus really is.**

Only as we've secured ourselves on the foundation of the knowledge of Jesus Christ as our Lord God, and as our Saviour, can we begin to answer the question, "Who do you say I am?" correctly. Only as we cease placing limits on who Jesus is, allowing Jesus to replace our deceptive understanding, driven by worldly pursuits and hopes of grandeur in this world; only as our spirits are kindled with the power of the Holy Spirit to ignite our hearts in accord with the God of the Universe, can we grow in understanding of who Jesus really is. Only as we comprehend with a heavenly knowledge can we be commanded to proclaim the good news without restraint such as the disciples did following Jesus' death and resurrection.

Jesus claimed to be the only way for individuals to be redeemed, when He said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" [John 14:6]. Jesus didn't come to preach a "feel good" message of inclusiveness so there's no room in our message to those we love to allow them to go their own way; the reality of human sin and the radical measures God takes on behalf of our redemption is only available through the Messiah, through Jesus and that is the message we must carry. All of the evidence for Christ presents a solid cumulative case argument for the truth of Jesus and His claims. Far from being judgmental and narrow-minded with regards to the exclusive claims of Jesus, Christians are merely seeking to share the truth. The claims of Christ are not a matter of taste and are not meant to make individuals comfortable.

Jesus is indeed a great moral teacher, but He's much more. He calls us to repent and follow Him. That leaves us with the declaration that He is either Lord - or He's a lunatic or liar and not to be trusted. There's no middle ground. The early church rested their belief by saying merely, "Jesus is Lord" even at the expense that such a statement, and commitment to it, often resulted in severe persecution. But either Jesus is Lord or He is not. Christians believe He is who He claimed to be, which brings us back to the opening question Jesus asked, "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" Our individual answer is of eternal importance.

### *Who do you say Jesus is?*

If you've arrived at the conclusion, and I hope you have, that Jesus is the living Son of the God of the Universe, and that having accepted Him as Lord *and* Saviour of your life, letting Him cleanse you from sin and lifting you from the muck and mire of a filthy existence apart from God, then have you truly considered the implications of His true identity and what that should mean in *your* daily life? Listen to what Jesus says our response must be, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it." [Lk 9:23-24 NRSV] To follow Jesus requires self-denial, complete dedication and willingness to obey Him.



- **“Deny yourself”** Cease to make self the object of your life and actions. Let Christ have the throne of your heart.
- **“Take up your cross daily”** Be completely devoted to Him each and every day. Begin your day with God in prayer and meditation; walk with the Lord throughout your day allowing Him to lead you.
- **“Follow me”** If we would let Christ lead us, we must obey His words and do what He says even when it is unpopular and may cost us.



### ***Counting the Cost!***

What does He say will happen to those who **don't** acknowledge who He is and who **don't** respond to Him as He says? He says He will *“be ashamed of them”* and they will be judged for their decision or indecisiveness. And Jesus says, they will *“lose their lives”* meaning eternal life with God will be forfeited. Hell is spending an eternity acknowledging Jesus too late and living apart from Him forever!

Therefore, Jesus wants all people, including us, to know who He really is. He revealed many things about Himself through His “encounters” with people. He did this though, in very nature God, humbling Himself, coming to earth, taking on the form of man, making Himself nothing, in order that people might know who He really was. In return, Jesus isn't very interested in people gaining *“head knowledge”* of, *“paying lip service”* to who He is, but rather that their understanding of who He is should be anchored to their eternal existence, affecting the way they live and relate to Him daily in every way.

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The question Jesus is asking each one of us is *“Who do you say I am?”* After having examined all the encounters with Jesus within the scriptures you've read, after experiencing Jesus in your own life, after following Him through whatever presence He has had in your life and seeing His authority over nature around you; sickness, sin and death; after tasting His compassion, His grace; who do you now say Jesus is? Is Jesus your Lord, your Saviour? Do not leave this page today if you can't answer that question with a resounding **YES**

without talking to someone about salvation in Christ. If your understanding of Jesus has changed, if you have grown deeper in your commitment to our Heavenly Father and understood in a new way that Jesus is the only real answer, how do you think this new understanding of who He is should practically change the way you live and relate to Him? Are you ready to take up your cross and follow Jesus regardless of the cost?

These questions are matters of truth, designed to make us uncomfortable in the realization that we're fallen beings in need of serious redemption. Who do you say Jesus is? Christ helps us find the right answer and, by doing so, changes our lives for the better and, in turn, allows us to change the world for the glory of God. As the Apostle Paul so succinctly summed it up, *“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* [1 Corinthians 3:11]

Why not give us a call or send an email letting us know how Jesus is your Lord and Saviour today? We'd love to hear from you.

Blessings,

***Pastor Dave***