

9-12-21

Sermon: Who IS Jesus To YOU?

Scripture: Mark 8:27-38, CTW Ps19

Hymns: 237, 455, 460

Theme: This morning our Gospel lesson poses some questions for all of us. As He often does, Jesus seizes a teachable moment with simple questions: Who do MEN say that I am, and who do YOU say that I am? These questions go to the very core of our faith. So, what do YOU say?

**I. As We Discussed Last Week, Life is Full of Questions.** In fact, my wife will tell you that there are those who spend their lives going to school to figure out those questions only to find out that there is an endless supply of them. Wonder who she is talking about there?

A little girl watching a wedding asked her mother why the bride wore white. The mother responded that white is a happy color and the wedding day is the happiest day of a bride's life. The little girl then followed with the question, "then why is the groom wearing black?" The mother did not respond...

**A. Life is full of questions, Questions abound everywhere.** What am I going to do with my life? What will I be? Will the kids turn out all right? What will tomorrow bring?

Not only do these practical questions beg for an answer, but so do questions concerning your spiritual life. Am I saved? When I die will I go to heaven? Why does God allow such tragedy to exist on the earth?

**\*Remember what Rick Warren says- god will ask "Did you know my Son and what did you do about it?"**

Then there are the philosophical questions. Which comes first- the chicken or the egg, or how many angels can fit on the head of a pin?

Or the one I liked in my philosophy class in college-" If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it fall, does it still make a noise?" How about--- who cares?

These questions have one common element to them which is illustrated by the following story: "A college sophomore tried to prove how smart he was one day by asking his professor the following question, "Is the bird I'm holding dead or alive???"

If the professor said the bird was dead, the student was going to free the bird and let it fly away; if the professor said it was alive, the student was going to crush the bird. The professor looked at the student and said, "My boy, the answer is in your hands."

**B. This morning our gospel lesson poses some questions for us.** As He often does, Jesus seizes a teachable moment and asks the disciples two questions: "Who do **men** say that the Son of Man is??" and "Who do **you** say that I am?" **Jesus is asking us these questions too!**

Then Peter, good old Peter, responds for the group of disciples by saying: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." In his answer, Peter went to the head of the class, framing a response which was to become one of the most fundamental understandings of our faith.

**II. Here is the foundational statement upon which our faith was to be built:**

Peter calls him Savior, Lord, son of God. Peter knew Jesus was unique, Peter knew Jesus was more than a common man because **this** man, who was at the **same time** God, had changed him.

Peter was growing in his walk, coming to trust and believe in Jesus more and more. He saw past the man and saw the divinity hidden in Jesus so he could cry out, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

**A. Of course, looks and first impressions can be deceiving:**

An organist was practicing one day in a great church in Europe. A man came up to the organ and asked if he could play. The organist looked at him and thought to himself, I shouldn't let this man play, just look at him, he is unshaven, his clothes are soiled, and he looks like a bum.

So he told the man no. But the stranger asked again and again. Finally the organist let him play thinking he couldn't play very long, after all, what does a bum know about organs?

The stranger's fingers danced over the keyboard in a way the organist hadn't heard in his lifetime. The stranger played on and on.

The organist was spellbound. When the stranger got up to leave, the organist could not contain himself and shouted, **"Who are you, what is your name?"**

As the stranger, who looked like a bum slowly walked away, turned over his shoulder and said, "My name is Felix Mendelssohn." The organist gasped and said to himself, "I almost did not let the master play."

**B. In the same way, do you and I see the master in others and might they see the master in us?**

Do we see Christ in the words of comfort offered during trouble, do we see Christ in someone who we regard as less, or not as good as we are?

Peter saw the divinity in the man Jesus and we need to be concerned with how we see and feel the divinity of Christ today.

We can miss seeing Jesus who is all around us and in each of us, because at times we get so caught in the exterior stuff of our faith.

"Who do you say that I am?" asks Jesus. The answer lies in your hands, and Jesus needs to know on a daily basis what your answer is. Has your answer changed?

Sometimes, circumstances force us to take Jesus' question one step further. If God is in Jesus, why does God do what He does?

**\*Paul says we cannot understand the mind of God.**

Paul searches for answers but comes to the conclusion, to the realization that all he and anyone else can do is worship God and enjoy Him forever. But like any child, the questions sometimes still come bubbling out!

**\*Paul realizes that when you get right down to it, all one can do is stand in awe of God. We are to be constantly transformed by the renewal of our mind—hence the inner need to always be learning and growing.**

**III. To understand, explain and comprehend all that God does, is indeed impossible, but that fact DOES NOT STOP THE QUESTIONS.**

**A. And there is a threshold question here---Do we allow God to be God?** Do we stand in awe and wonder of His majesty and power?

Dr. Raymond Gibson in his book, "Forever in Debt" says: "One of the great tragedies of our time is that we Christians have lost our sense of wonder and awe. We are a scientifically minded generation who consider all of living as a logical thing to be explained, analyzed and defined.

This is because we love to be in control and do not like things we cannot find the answer to.

**Remember last week's message...it is good (actually necessary, to wonder as you wander...**

In our own searching and wanting to be in control, have we lost sight of the majesty and awe that the early Christians had of God?

**B. In the modern world, people join and leave churches on the basis of how a church supposedly "makes them feel".** However, I would suggest that we cannot let a mere feeling control or subvert the function of the church in our lives.

Let us look at our worship time as a time not to "feel good" but as a time for caring, sharing, loving and receiving each other in God's name.

The feeling good then becomes a by product of that Christian process.

If we are therefore supposed to be more interested in the process, then what plans do you personally have to grow this church and spread God's word so that the process can thrive?

Think about what you have done in that regard. Can you do more? We have all this in our Vision Statement, but are we doing it?

Cadillac used to have a commercial with the "hook line" that says, "When you turn on your car does it return the favor?"

So, If your church "turns you on, do you return the favor?"

Being in God's presence is not primarily a time where I just feel good. It is a time where I worship God and respect His authority in my life as my Savior and Lord.

Christ calls us to use our worship time to regain that awe, that wonder, that sense of worshipping in the name and presence of almighty God.

#### **IV. We need to use our worship time to regain the majesty, power and wonder of God who captures our imaginations with His grace.**

##### **A. Let us recapture the image that worship is a time and place to allow God to bring us into a relationship with Him.**

Let us recapture the **essence** of worship which begs for Jesus' question to be answered, "But who do **you** say that I am?"

My friends, **know this**, like the student with the bird, the answer lies in your hands!!!!

In Romans, Paul teaches us that we cannot, by our own effort drum up more faith, but it will come **if we actively pursue it**. In other words, it is the process that is important, not just the clinical finding of answers to the questions.

**B. Our message for today is that there should be that same awe, that same excitement and wonder that children have when they encounter God.**

I would like to close with words from a song our children sing about that excitement at camp.

Listen to the words and be resolved to find ways to capture the excitement, the love, the caring for God and His people that we find in this song:

"It only takes a spark to keep the fire going. And soon all those around can warm up in its glowing. That's how it is with God's love....Once you've experienced it you spread His love to everyone...You want to pass it on....I wish for you my friend this happiness that I've found....You can depend on Him....It matters not where you're bound....I'll shout it from the mountain top...I want the world to know....the Lord of love has come to me....and I want to pass it on..."

Amen and amen, let us pray....