

Title: “Who Do You Say I Am?”

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Matthew 16:13-20

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Lesson: *Who does Jesus say that I am? Who do I say that I am? Who does society say that I am?*

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

I've never heard a pastor ask a question like the one I'm about to ask you this morning. And even though you may have never heard it asked from the pulpit, it is a question that every pastor seems to ask himself as he prepares his message, and that question is simply this: What do you want out of this passage? What are you looking for? It's a question that might immediately sound simplistic, but as you begin to ponder, you may find that it is really difficult to answer. What is it, specifically that you are trying to extract from this passage? Think about that as I re-read it:

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

What are you looking for in this passage? How you answer that is really dependent upon your situation in life, right here, right now. Here's what I mean:

Let me introduce you to a single mother of two children: a 5-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy. Since the start of the pandemic, she has had to juggle her life around so that she can continue to work full time as a dental assistant. Normally, during the summer, having her children out of school is easy because she enrolls them in day camps and other activities throughout the weeks so the time they are actually home without her is quite minimized. However, this summer it is quite different because the camps are closed, and the community activities are cancelled. It hasn't been impossible, but she worries about leaving her children home alone all day. She also worries that the contact she has with patients puts her health at risk and although she is very careful, there is no assurance that she won't get sick or that the office won't close because business has decreased. What does she want out of this passage? Maybe she hears Jesus speaking to Peter when he says “... and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” She needs a

rock right now because she's not sure what she is anchored to. She knows that she must cling to Jesus and she prays almost constantly to him for strength and wisdom. She believes in him, trusts in him, but the uncertainty of these days challenges her confidence, makes her sometimes question if he really is the rock he says that he is. She's searching for words of stability and security.

What about Saul of Tarsus? If he were listening to these words, what would he be looking for? My guess is that he'd focus in on Christ's question to the disciples: "But who do you say that I am?" He was anchored to the God of the Jews. He was well versed in the books of the Torah for he had studied them for many, many years. He was a leader in the church and stood firmly on a foundation of his knowledge and faith in God. He had built his life, even his reputation upon it; it was his identity and his belief was unshakable so he would probably be searching for the answer to the question that Jesus asked. *Who is this person that claims to be God?*

What about you? What are you searching for in this passage? What are you going through in your life right now? And what do you need to hear from God this morning? Are you struggling with your faith? Trying to understand how God can allow these world events to continue without intervention? Are struggling with your health and are searching for comfort of his words? Are you looking for "Christ, the Son of the living God" or are you looking for a rock that can withstand the assaults from Satan himself? *What is it that you are searching for this morning?*

Regardless of how you answered the question I think at its very root is simply this: **What is my identity?** Now, I didn't ask what my identity was *in Christ*, because that would be leading; I simply asked about my identity. Who do *I* say that *I* am? This is, at its core, the most fundamental question that we can ask ourselves today. Who do *I* say that *I* am? From where do I find my identity? We have two choices in how we answer this question: we either find our identity in Jesus, our Lord and Savior, or we find our identity in the things of this world. We either find our identity at the feet of Christ or we find it at the feet of Satan. There are no other sources. Do we define ourselves by the money that we make, the job title that we hold, or the power that we possess? Do we ask, "Who do *I* say that *I* am?"

Or, do we define ourselves by the life that we live in the shadow of the cross? Do we see ourselves as the hands and feet of God, serving others, sharing selflessly our gifts and our treasures of time, and money, and talent? Do we not even ask the question: "Who do *I* say that *I* am?" And do we not even ask the question; "Jesus, who do *you* say that *I* am?" because we already know the answer? Do we instead find within this passage **a statement**? A statement so bold and so powerful? A statement that we can loudly proclaim **only because** we are anchored to Jesus, the Son of the Living God. Instead of a question, do we shout:

I am who you say that I am!

I am greatly loved by God (1 John 4:19).

I am a child of God and friend of Jesus (John 1:12, John 15:15).

I am chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).
I am God's workmanship, created in Christ for good works that God has prepared beforehand (Ephesians 2:10).

I am redeemed through his blood, forgiven of all my trespasses (Ephesians 1:7).
I am justified by His grace (Romans 3:24).
I am no longer a slave but a son of God (Galatians 4:7).
I am free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).
I am in Christ, a new creation; the old being passed away (2 Cor 5:17).
I am a member of Christ's body and a partaker of his promise (Ephesians 3:6).
I am united in Christ, brought to complete unity. (John 17:22-23).

I am holy and without blame before God (Eph 1:4, 1 Peter 1:16).
I am joined to the Lord and am one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17).
I am God's temple and the Holy Spirit lives within me (1 Cor. 6:19).
I am marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13).
I am raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6).
I am a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:22).

I am far from oppression and I will not live in fear (Isaiah 54:14).
I am born of God, and the evil one does not touch me (1 John 5:18).
I am complete in Him who is the head over all rule and authority - of every angelic and earthly power (Col. 2:10).

I am who you say that I am!

And the gates of hell, and the attacks of Satan can never change that.

I am defined by you.

Please pray with me.
Who am I that the highest King
Would welcome me?
I was lost but you brought me in
And you set me free
I am chosen
Not forsaken
I am who you say I am
You are for me
Not against me
I am who you say I am.
In your name we pray. Amen.