

Do you remember in school when the teacher
would come in and say, "Please clear your desks.
We're having a pop quiz today?"
And you were struggling to have the right answers?

Today as we begin our journey through Matthew –
the disciples are faced with a similar situation –
like being in class when the teacher pulls a pop quiz.
Do you have what it takes today
to answer the question from Jesus:
Who do you say that I am?

Jesus and His disciples ventured into
the District of Caesarea Philippi.
The region was known for various religions:
It is no accident that the synoptic gospels
all say that Jesus asks these two questions
in the most Gentile place of all.
All the way through the book of Matthew
these disciples have been with Jesus.
for about 3 years, and now it's final exam time.
He asks first who the people of this region say He is,
and then who the disciples say He is.

Do you have what it takes to be my followers?
Are you my followers or just my fans?
And you must answer not only with your head,
intellectually, but with your heart, spiritually.
These are the keys to the kingdom.

Who do you say that I am?

First this is a perennial question.

This question is repeated in every age.
There is no neutrality with this question...
you cannot avoid it, you must answer.
In fact, it seems that everybody has
an opinion about Jesus in his day and ours.

13 When Jesus arrived in the villages of Caesarea Philippi,
he asked his disciples, "What are people saying about who the Son of Man is?"

It's always been this way;
Jesus as seen by the masses is seen in so many different ways.
You can speak of Jesus as prophet,
holy man, teacher, or spiritual leader, and few will object.
But speak of Him as Son of God, divine,
of the same nature as the Father,
and people will line up to express their disapproval.

Who do you say Jesus is?
There was wide speculation at this time
about just who or what kind of person
the Messiah might be.
So, Jesus was asking not in general but
what Jewish people in this most Gentile-controlled
of regions expected the Son of Man to be.

In verse 14 the opinion of the crowd was...
**"Some think he is John the Baptizer, some say Elijah,
some Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."**

The answers to this question say a lot
about the hopes and expectations of these people.
That **John the Baptist** tops the list indicates
just how expectant (and perhaps disappointed) they were.
After all they both preached.
They basically came announcing the
same message of repentance,
repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

But Jesus was a far greater preacher than John,
and He spoke with an authority that was astonishing.
He not only spoke the Word of God,
He was himself was the living Word of God.
John only pointed to the Lamb of God, but Jesus personified the Lamb.
Some said that He was **Elijah** returned
from heaven because of his prayers.
Here was a man who had so much power
in prayer that he could: Pray and ask God
to send rain and God would.
Pray and ask God to stop the rain and He would.

But, what a man of prayer was Jesus.
When the disciples came to Jesus and
said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray."

That has always been a fascinating statement to me.
They had seen Jesus perform miracles.
They had heard the teaching and
preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet the thing that struck them so much
and gave them so much desire to emulate
was the prayer life of the Lord Jesus Christ.
They were blown away by His ability
to talk to His Father, and they were happy
to learn they could easily do the same.
That says a lot to us today about
the importance of prayer in our life.

Some said that He was Jeremiah returned
from the grave because of His heart.
Jeremiah was the weeping prophet,
and was known for His tears.
Jeremiah was a man with a heart.
And Jesus was known for being moved to tears...
from His compassion on the crowd
to the tomb of Lazarus and the
shortest verse in the Bible,
our Jesus wept, and still today when we are hurting,

Everybody had their opinions about who Jesus was.

What the people of that day were doing
was comparing Jesus to other men.
But you just can't compare
Jesus Christ to other men.
There is no one to stand
alongside the Lord Jesus Christ.
Jesus Christ is supreme.
Jesus Christ is the name that is above every name.
He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
He is the One, the Only Jesus,
the only one who has ever been,
the only one who ever will be. The GOAT

We'll never find the right answer to the
perennial question by taking a public opinion poll.
When it comes to Jesus,
the big crowd is always wrong,
yet many make public opinion their main

method of gaining spiritual understanding.

They have heard what they believe from somebody else.

"The Bible is full of contradictions" they say,

and usually, they have never read it for themselves.

"I can worship God anywhere"

they say, but they don't.

"You just want my money" they say,

and I reply, "but that's not all!"

Maybe we need to stop asking

them just to church, and start asking them

the perennial question they need to answer,

Who is Jesus Christ to You?

Second this is a personal question.

Then, Jesus in verse 15 **He pressed them,**

"And how about you? Who do you say I am?"

Jesus forces you to make a decision about Him.

He comes to you and He knocks at your heart's door

and says, "You, who do you say that I the Son of Man is?"

Jesus narrows the focus.

Every person must answer this question.

The crowd cannot answer it for you.

You cannot abstain or opt out from answering...

you can delay, but you cannot hide forever,

you will answer someday.

And there are really only 4 answers that you can give:

- **"He's a legend.** It's all made up. He never really was."

A very small minority today believe this one.

There is almost nobody on the earth today

who would intelligently take the position

that Jesus Christ never existed. Why?

Because there is more evidence, more recorded,

more textual proof, more historical data

for the existence of Jesus Christ.

- **"He was a liar.** Everything He claimed about Himself was a lie."

He deceived people into thinking He was someone He was not.

He was a good teacher, a good person who did good things, but He was not God in the flesh."

This position is not even an option. Why?

Because He claimed to be God,

and if He wasn't then He was a liar,

and good people don't go around living a lie.
It wasn't a little white lie if He was lying,
He was a pathological, habitual deceiver...
is that a good person? No!
And people can see right through that kind of liar.

Investigate carefully the four Gospels in the New Testament.
Listen very carefully to the words that Jesus spoke,
examine the things Jesus said to His disciple
and the claims that He made and
then reasonably ask yourself the question –
does this man sound like a liar to me?
The evidence is absolutely overwhelming.

- **"He was a lunatic.** He was off in the head."
You might think that He was everything
He claimed to be but He was mentally deranged a little.
But again, read and listen to His words,
and see how the people marveled.

They said, where does He get His wisdom?
Does He sound like a crazy man to you?
The most brilliant minds have studied
His words for centuries and have only
scratched the surface at the depth of His wisdom!
And so, if he was not a legend, if he was not a liar,
or if he was not a lunatic, then there's only
one other conclusion you can make...

- **it is that he is the Lord of Lords.**

Verse **16 Simon Peter said, "You're the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God."**

Peter was saying that Jesus is the anointed One.
You are the long awaited One that all the Old Testament
scriptures had predicted would come.
The often predicted Messiah.
Peter puts Jesus on the throne of the universe.
"You are the Son of the Living God."

That is the confession that makes all the difference.
But, in our modern world,
Very few would answer that he was the Son of God,
How long can you wait to face the question

when you know He's not a legend,
it makes no sense that He was a liar,
and it is plain He was no lunatic.

Philippians 2:10-11 That at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow...and that every tongue
should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Who you believe Jesus is and who you are
willing to confess Jesus is,
makes all the difference in the world.
Who do you believe Jesus is?
What is your personal confession about the Lord Jesus?
Who do you say that I am?
Not only is this question the perennial question,
and a personal question...
Third it is a providential question.

17 Jesus came back, "God bless you, Simon, son of Jonah! You didn't get that answer out of books or from teachers. My Father in heaven, God himself, let you in on this secret of who I really am.

it's only by the grace, goodness, and
guidance of God that any of us can ever
come to the place of answering this question correctly.
The right answer comes by divine revelation,
not by human speculation.
Only the Father in heaven can make
the truth real in your heart.
Don't miss heaven by 18 inches...What?
the distance between your head and your heart.

**So, what's the difference between
believing in your head and in your heart?**

A man walked a tightrope high
in the air with no safety net.
A great crowd gathered below to watch.
Then he took a wheelbarrow across.

Then he talked to the crowd.
"How many here believe I can take a
person across inside the wheelbarrow?"
Everyone raised their hand.
He pointed to one man raising his hand.

“You sir, come here and jump in.”

The man took off running!

He believed it in his head but not in his heart.

18 And now I'm going to tell you who you are, really are.

You are Peter, a rock. This is the rock on which

I will put together my church, a church so expansive
with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out.

It's a powerful image Jesus uses for
the church in his blessing of Peter.

You have a faith to confess,
the confession Peter offered and Jesus strongly affirmed.
Jesus is the Christ, and we are his body.

I remember how excited I was when I got
my first math book that had the answers in the back.
Do you remember that? I had always struggled with math
and I thought to myself this year is going to be different.

My homework didn't take long that first night.
Every answer was correct.
But there were no stars or smiley faces, and I didn't get a 100.
I got an F and a red ink note that said, what? “Show me your work.”

It's not enough to just give the correct answer.

We have to live the right answer.

How are you and I living up to who we actually are
as Christ's representatives in the world?

So, who is Jesus Christ to you?

Who do you say that I am?