

Jordan Station United Church

September 12, 2021

Creation Week 1 – 16th Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Anita Spiller

Sermon: “Who do you say I am?”

(Mark 8:27-38)

“Who do you say I am?” Jesus asked His disciples. The question is recorded in three of the four Gospels which is a very big deal. When 3 writers tell versions of the same story it gives it real credibility. Either that or two of them were copying his homework. The question we are wrestling with today is more complicated that it might appear and their answers are not simple either. When someone asks you your name, what do you say?

Ken, Marilyn, Sarah, Dave, Krysten. One would expect that the answer would have been simply “Jesus!” But no! Jesus poses the question in [Matthew 16:13-16](#), [Mark 8:27-29](#), and [Luke 9:18-20](#).

In all three accounts, Jesus first asks, “Who do people say I am?” ([Mark 8:27](#)) or “Who do the crowds say I am?” ([Luke 9:18](#)).

The answers were...

“John the Baptist;

Elijah;

one of the prophets!”

Perhaps at some point in your life and perhaps even more so during the darkest days of this global pandemic you have asked yourself who is Jesus to me?

Is Jesus a friend...teacher...confident...prophet...the Son of God...a heretic?

The question in today’s scripture is very personal. Deeply personal and only you know the answer. Who do **YOU** say that Jesus **IS**?

Is this a question or a test for his disciples and for us?

Jesus, of course, knew who He was. He didn’t need the disciples to tell Him. I suspect with his intuition and divine state of being he might already have known what they would say. Jesus often asked questions to teach and make people think. He would often answer a question with a question, leading people to find answers. In saying things aloud, they were led to think about situations. My

mother you use to do that when I was a kid. Answer and question with a question inevitably saying yes but what do YOU think? Who do YOU say that Jesus is?

Now, it was time for the disciples to claim Jesus' identity for themselves. But Mark doesn't give us that bit of insight. We have to look to the Gospel of Mathew some insight. In Matthew's version, "Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God'" ([Matthew 16:16](#)).

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth will be lost in heaven."

Jesus showed just how important Peter's statement was: His identity as the Messiah and Son of God was the very rock, or foundation, on which the church would be built.

The disciples were beginning to understand more of who Jesus was. The title "Messiah" was often misunderstood at the time; most expected the foretold Messiah to be a military leader who would deliver Israel from Roman rule. This may be part of why Jesus told the disciples after Peter's confession not to tell anyone He was the Messiah; people would misunderstand. However, Jesus came to do much more than free us from earthly rule.

It would still take until after Jesus' death and resurrection for the disciples to quite "get it." However, right after telling the disciples that He was indeed the Messiah, Jesus began foretelling his death. "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, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" ([Matthew 16:21](#)). Jesus wasn't going to be the type of Messiah—or God—that anyone expected.

So why does any of this matter? Clearly, whoever Jesus is, what we believe about His identity, about his life and death and resurrection has consequences. If you believe that Jesus is the Messiah and that he died for our sins, then you will have salvation.

I think theologian C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, said it best when he wrote these words: "*I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral*

teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. Only as the Son of God can Jesus offer hope.”

The core principle that sets Christianity apart from every other religion is our belief that the supreme God of the universe took on human flesh, lived among us, and then, in His immense love, died that we might be forgiven. If we are willing to claim Jesus as your Saviour and submit ourselves to Him, we are invited to live with God forever. This is something no prophet, teacher, or revolutionary can offer. Are we willing to accept the great power and love of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God?
Thanks be to God. Amen