

September 16th, 2018

Who do they say you are?

Prayer

May the words of my mouth be the meditations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee. Oh Lord our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon

As we go through the gospel according to Mark, we hear and see that Mark is trying to give just the bare facts. He wants people to be able to read his account of the life and death of Jesus. For them to make up their own minds to decide exactly who Jesus is and what that means for their lives. So, he doesn't add a whole lot of extra stuff. And we have that in this short reading from this morning.

We're about midway through Jesus's earthly ministry. For over a year now, he has been teaching about the kingdom of God. He gathered his closest disciples. He has gotten a larger group following him at this point. And it's time to make an assessment. It's time for him to try to get an idea of what the people are really hearing and taking away from his teaching. And from the miracles that he is performing.

And so, as he walks with his disciples he asks them, "Who do the people say that I am?" And they answer from what they've been hearing from the crowds. Some believe that he is a reincarnation of John the Baptist. That John the Baptist even though he was beheaded has come back to life in this person of Jesus. Others

say well this must be Elijah. This must be the forerunner of the Messiah. The one who will be raised up to lead Israel back to its great Glory Days like under King David.

And then others are saying he sounds an awful like the prophets of old. The ones who would come on the scene and tell us, the people of the covenant, where we have gone wrong. To speak God's word and to draw us back. So that we could be in the right relationship with God once again. We don't have Jesus responding to any of those. He simply is assessing what people are thinking and what they are hearing. How they see who this Jesus is. But the disciples now have been intimately involved with Jesus. They've been traveling with him for a year, year-and-a-half. He needs to know where they are. He needs to know whether they are hearing and seeing and interpreting the things that he is saying and doing. But who do you say that I am?

I like the way that Mark put that. I'm assuming the way Jesus said it. But expecting them to have a different perspective because they have been walking with him throughout Israel. But who do you say that I am? And as often happens Peter is the one who speaks up. You are the Messiah. And in another gospel, it's added you are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. And so, Jesus in assessing where the disciples are. Now thinks it's time to take that next step. And to begin to tell them exactly what it means to be the Messiah. What it's going to entail. What they need to be prepared for.

So, He begins to tell them this means that I'm going to be rejected by the chief priests and the scribes and the Pharisees. Which they've already seen some of that. This is going to lead to suffering. It's going to lead to death. And Peter wasn't ready for that. That's not what it meant for him when he said you're the

Messiah. It meant that great things were coming. It meant that you were going to continue to lead us and put Israel back into prominence. The kingdom of God that you've been talking about surely it is our people being raised up to this new place that you're talking about with you as our leader.

So, Peter rebukes him. Takes some aside. I like that he took him aside. He didn't want to embarrass him in front of the other disciples. But he rebukes him. He says that Jesus turned around to look at the other disciples. He wanted to assess what they were thinking. Are you agreeing with Peter? Is this what you all think? And then he rebukes Peter. You're thinking on human terms. You ought to be at a point now where you're not doing that. This is divine things, this is Godly things. This is different. You got to put that other stuff away and be raised up to this new understanding, this new look to what God is doing in the world.

I was thinking about that. Jesus needed to assess what the people were hearing. How they saw who he was and what he was about. And that was a very important thing. It helped guide Jesus to what he needed to do next. To help the people and his own disciples to understand the fullness of who he was and what he was all about. And so, we have the next year-and-a-half traveling through Israel. and he continues to try to teach and have them understand that. I was thinking about that and I thought you know, that's an important thing. To assess how people, see who you are. Have you ever thought about asking that question to the people that you were engaged with? That you work with? That you see in the stores, even to family members? Who do you say that I am? That's how Jesus asked question. But how do you see who I am?

Now the men's breakfast group on Wednesday mornings are studying a book called, "Not a Fan." Of which I'm not sure I'm a fan. And we've had our interesting conversations because of what Kyle Idleman brings up in his book. And I don't agree with some of it or the way he put some of it. But the other is that I've noticed is it gets the men talking. And two this is about the third or fourth time that I brought it up in sermons. So, it's having an effect. But in the last chapter that we read, he talks about being a pastor in a church and having to do funerals. And sometimes as an ordained minister, you are called upon to do a funeral, you don't always know the individual very well. Twice in the years that I've been ordained I have gone to church's and both times it was in the first year. Very interesting. First time in a small parish, I had 23 funerals in the first 12 months. And the second time I went to a very large parish right outside of St. Louis. And again, in the first 12 months I did 24 funerals. Now as you might imagine when you're doing that many funerals and your new to the parish you don't know the people that have died very well and sometimes not at all.

And so, when the family gathers together to put together a funeral service, to make it personal you have to ask them. Tell me about the individual who died. Who do you say that he or she is? And many times, you get a full history. He or she is one of several siblings. Has been married for this many years. Was a kind person, was in the military, or did this for a job. All these kinds of things, hobbies, you get all these kinds of things. And Kyle Idleman in his book says what he always wanted to hear them say. Was that he I know this person as a Christian.

You know being the cynical kind of person that I am, I just kind of assumed that if they were coming to me to do a funeral and they have been attending my church, that they were a Christian.

It didn't really surprise me that they didn't say, "Oh by the way he or she was an Episcopalian." I kind of took that for granted. Kyle and I don't really get along. But I was wondering if you were to ask family members or people you work with or people you go to or went to school with. And you ask them the question that Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" I wonder what the response would be. I wonder if or where in the list of things that they say about you or about me that that person is a Christian. Where that would come or if that would come.

You see, it's how we live. It's how we relate to the world. If people don't see you sneak in here at St Jude's or catch you when you're leaving do they know that you are a Christian? By the way you speak. By the way you act. How you treat them and how you treat other people around you. Who do they say that you are? Nice guy, kind of quiet, does his work, kind of stays out of the way or maybe not. Who do people say that you are?

Now I have a step up if you will on most of you because a lot of the times when I'm out and about I wear this funny collar. And people see that, and they assume that I'm some kind of a clergy person. They may not know what denomination. and every Catholic always calls me father when they see this collar. Even though it's not a roman collar that I wear. So, I have that going for me even though I must admit that one time I was at Walmart dressed as I usually am black shirt, white collar, sports coat. And someone did ask me if I work there. It was all I could do to say, "Why yes, I'm the store Chaplin how can I help you.

That's what I wanted to say but I didn't. I simply said no I don't work here. But you were out in the community. You are out with those you work with. You are out with those who you have as neighbors and friends. What would they say about you? This

person is a Christian. They treat people with respect. They pray for those in need. They reach out to those who need help. What do people say about you?

Now you can think about that. Most of us are not going to have the courage to go to someone who knows us. Doesn't necessarily know that we go to this church. And ask them, "Who do you say that I am?" And they'll get a very panicked look on their face because they don't know what you're driving at. But just to see how your seen. Are you making it clear that you're a Christ follower? Are you making it clear that you believe the Christ is the Messiah and the Son of Living God? The one who calls us to be peacemakers. To work for justice and peace among all people. To respect the dignity of every human being.

Is that what they see? Is that what they experienced? Is that what they see in the day-to-day living of your life? It should be. We should not ever be ashamed of saying that I follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. That it is because of who Jesus is that is because who I am. That is who I'm trying to become. That is who I'm trying to reflect. It shouldn't be until the time when we come to do a funeral that people are saying this is who this person was. And this person was a Christian. They lived it out in their life. They showed it in their actions. How they spoke, how they lived. Jesus asked, "Who do the people say that I am?" Who do you say that Jesus is? And how do you show that in your life? How do people see you? Who do people say that you are?

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