

“YOU ARE THE CHRIST”

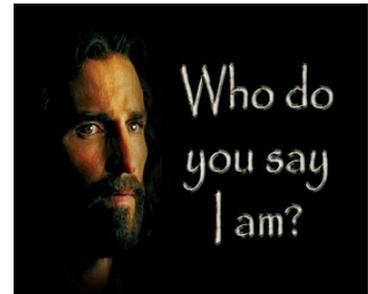
Mark 8:27-33

Key Verse: 8:29

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.”

This morning, we want to talk about relationships. We have all kinds of relationships. You may have a casual relationship with your neighbor; you say hello when you see him, and not much else. You also have a business relationship with your coworkers, teachers, dentists and others. You might have a romantic relationship with someone. Sometimes, you may feel like asking, “Where is this relationship headed?” when he or she lacks a firm commitment. The most important question we should ask is, “What is my relationship with Jesus?” That is what Jesus asks in today’s passage. Who is Jesus to you? What would you answer him if he asks you, “Who do you say I am?”

In today’s passage, Peter makes a confession of faith, “You are the Christ.” This was an important turning point in both Peter’s life of faith and also in Jesus’ ministry, because after hearing his confession, Jesus began to teach his disciples how he would complete God’s redemptive plan. He taught them that he would suffer and die on the cross for the sin of the world, and rise again from the dead. Before we can really grow in Christ, we need to answer Jesus’ question, “Who do you say I am?”



I. “YOU ARE THE CHRIST” (27-30)

Look at verse 27. *“Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, ‘Who do people say I am?’”* Caesarea Philippi was a city about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. It was built by Herod Philip in honor of Caesar Augustus. Jesus traveled the Gentile region to help his disciples personally in this important juncture of his Messianic ministry. Jesus had called the 12 ordinary people to train them to be his disciples. Three years had already passed. Soon he had to make his way to Jerusalem where his crucifixion awaited. It was time for him to teach his disciples the meaning of his crucifixion and resurrection. But first he wanted to give them a mid-term examination to see if they were ready. The exam had two essay questions.

The first question Jesus asked was, “Who do people say I am?” It concerned people’s general view of Jesus. They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets” (28). The people recognized Jesus as a prophet such as John the Baptist or Elijah. The prophet Elijah lived during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, the most evil king and queen in Israel’s history (1Ki 18:16-40). They led the people of Israel astray to become idol worshipers (and we are not talking about American Idol). Elijah, with the Spirit of God, challenged the generation to turn away from their idol worship. John the Baptist came with the spirit of Elijah and preached the message of repentance in order to prepare the way of the Lord. Elijah and John the

Baptist were indeed great prophets of God. But they were still mere mortal men. They were not God. They couldn't be the Messiah. They couldn't save a single person from sin and death. Many people in Jesus' time respected him, but they did not really know him as the Son of God. Today, many people also respect Jesus as one of great men in history. But they don't know personally who Jesus really is. This is a great tragedy.

Look at verse 29. *"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ."* The second question Jesus asked concerned with the disciples' personal view of Jesus. It required their personal commitment to Jesus to answer the question. Several disciples raised their hands, but Peter quickly answered, "You are the Christ." It was a very short answer, but deserved an A+ grade. We call this "Peter's Confession of Faith" Let us think about the meaning of Peter's confession.

"Christ" in Greek (Χριστός) literally means "the Anointed One." In ancient times, kings, prophets and priests were anointed at the time of their inauguration. So Jesus is our king. In fact, the Bible says Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. Some people who know Jesus casually might consider Jesus as someone who was gentle and walked around to teach wise things with his gentle voice. But the title Christ teaches us that he is much more than that. He is the Mighty King who sits on the throne in heaven and he will eventually come to judge the living and the dead. He is the Creator God who created the heavens and the earth. Without him nothing was made that has been made (Jn 1:3). This means that our lives came from him. Jesus is the source of our lives.

The kings of this world rise to their throne by crushing their opponents with their military power. Saddam Hussein killed even his own son and uncle when he felt his position was threatened by them. But our King Jesus is different. His kingdom is not of this world. His kingdom is from above; it is a spiritual kingdom. And his kingdom is not temporary. His kingdom is forever. Most of all, Jesus became our king, not by yielding a sword, but by sacrificing his own life.

The title Christ in Hebrew is Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ). Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah whom God promised to send. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would come from the root of Jesse. Isaiah 9:6 says, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." This verse describes the character and role of the Messiah. The Messiah is a true friend and shepherd to all who are in need. He was living water to a thirsty Samaritan woman. He was a friend to a lonely tax collector Levi. Jesus was comfort to the brokenhearted. Jesus was a source of joy to all troubled people. Finally, Jesus became a Savior for us by dying on the cross. Jesus is the Christ who saves people from their sins. Jesus is the Savior King! Peter experienced Jesus by following him personally for three years. He now deeply realized that he was sinner before God. He saw Jesus as his personal Savior. So he confessed, "You are the Christ."

Then what is the significance of a confession of faith? What happens when we make a confession of faith? Romans 10:10 says, "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." When we confess that Jesus is the Christ, we are justified. God promises that if we confess our sins, he will forgive us (1Jn 1:9). No matter how terrible sinners we are, God forgives our sins and accepts us as his children, if we confess that Jesus is the Christ. He

takes away the guilt from our hearts. He takes away the burden of sin and the power of sin and death. When we confess that Jesus is the Christ, God gives us eternal life. When Peter made this confession of faith, Jesus promised to build his church on his faith and pass on to his people the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 16:17-19).

Jesus' two questions, "Who do people say I am?" and "Who do you say I am?" contrast the two ways of Christian living in this world. Some people say they are Christians but their view of Jesus is no more than someone who came from God and who did fantastic things. But Jesus' second question teaches us that to be a true believer of Christ requires a personal relationship with Christ and personal commitment to him. Without personal relationship with Jesus one cannot commit his life fully to Jesus.

How did Peter establish a personal relationship with Jesus? Peter followed Jesus personally. He saw everything that Jesus did with his eyes. He heard what Jesus said. He had common life with Jesus. And he knew Jesus as the "anointed one"—the king, the Messiah and the Savior. Peter used to be a smelly fisherman at Lake Galilee, working night shift every night, trying to catch more fish to pay his bills. He worked hard to make his family happy. He was happy whenever he had a large catch of fish and the balance of his bank account increased. But such happiness did not last very long. Most of all, he did not find a true purpose and meaning in life. Then one day, Jesus called him and said, "From now on, you will catch men." Jesus called him to be his disciple and showed him the wonderful spiritual world. Ever since Jesus came into his heart, Peter gave his heart to Jesus. When Peter said, "You are the Christ," it meant, "You are my God and my King, to whom I pledge my love, loyalty and obedience." Now Peter had a clear purpose and meaning in life.

This is what happened to me. In the mid 1970s I was a young man who seemed to be doing well in terms of career prospect. But spiritually I was totally lost in my sins and I did not know where I was going in the darkness of my sins, especially the sins of selfishness and lust. I had no true purpose or meaning in my life. Then Jesus called and saved me. He even called to be a missionary based on Mark 1:17, "I will make you a fisher of men." So, like Peter, I can confidently confess that Jesus is the Christ, my Lord and Savior.

But what does it mean to confess Jesus as the Christ. We know that some proud men have difficulty in confessing their love to their wives or parents. On the other hand, some people have no problem in confessing love. The problem is that they don't live their confession. That is why we have so many broken families. What is even more difficult than to confess love is to know and to practice love, because to be a true follower of Jesus means to do what Jesus tells us to do. In John 14:15 Jesus says, "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

II. HOW JESUS BECAME THE CHRIST (31-33)

After hearing the confession of faith, Jesus began to teach his disciples about what he would do to become the Messiah. Look at verse 31. *"He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again."* Worldly kings rise to power by crushing their political opponents, but Jesus became our Savior King through his suffering and death. Why did Jesus have to go

through much rejection, suffering, and finally death on the cross? He suffered and died because of our sins. Isaiah prophesied about him: “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isa 53:4,5). This was the way Jesus became the Messiah. Our Messiah is not a political king, but the spiritual King. He gave his life on the cross for our sins. He won us over to God. This way, Jesus became the Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Most importantly, Jesus became the Christ through his resurrection. Let’s read verse 31. *“He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.”* Especially, look at the last part of the verse: “... after three days rise again.” Evil men crucified Jesus. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death (Ac 2:24), and made him Christ the Lord. Through the resurrection, Jesus destroyed the power of sin and death. The remaining power of death is nothing but a vestige of wounded Satan. Through his resurrection, Jesus gave us a living hope in the kingdom of God.

Jesus’ teaching of his upcoming death and resurrection was very new to the disciples and it was hard for them to accept. So, as they continued their journey toward Jerusalem, Jesus told them about his suffering, death and resurrection again and again (9:31b, 10:33,34). The disciples hated the idea of their beloved rabbi suffering and dying. “Why does our king has to suffer and die? It does not make sense,” they would say. There is an interesting interaction and dialogue between Peter and Jesus about this. I will discuss this next Sunday; so stay tuned.

But to give you a sneak preview, I want to ask you a question. If you confess Jesus as your Christ, then what? Can we go around saying, “Hallelujah!” and live the same kind life that we used to live? The answer is No. If we truly accept Jesus as our Savior, as the one who saved us from our sin and death by paying the price of our sins with his blood, we would not go back to our sinful past. Instead, we would love him and do what he says. If we truly accept Jesus as our Savior King, we would honor him and do what he says. Jesus is not our Burger King. Some people have the Burger King Spirituality. Their motto is “Have it your way.” They say they are Christians but they refuse to do what Jesus says. But Jesus is our Savior King. We have to have him rule our hearts through his Holy Spirit.

In this passage, we notice that Jesus talked about what he would do after asking about the relationship. We should do the same. We want to make sure about our relationship with Jesus first, and then pay attention to what we should do for him. If we say, “I love Jesus” but don’t do anything for him, our confession becomes hollow.

This morning, we learned the importance of Jesus’ question, “Who do you say I am? Like Peter, we must come to Jesus and learn from him until we come to know him as our personal Savior King. May God help us to make a confession of faith, “You are the Christ!”