

The Gospel According to Luke

Luke 9:18-22 (*Matthew 16:13-20 and Mark 8:27-29*)

Reading: Matthew 16:13-20

Sermon #39

May 12, 2019

Who Do You Say That I Am ?

Certainty

Luke, whose name means “light-giving”, had a defined purpose in writing his gospel account stated clearly at the outset, reading from Luke 1, verse 1, “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus (teh·of·il·os) *whose name means – friend of God,* ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” (Luke 1:1-4) Luke’s gospel account fulfills the meaning of his name to give spiritual light to Theophilus in order that Theophilus would fulfill the meaning of his name, “friend of God” and through our study, we too, may gain spiritual light to know who the person of Jesus is and through him we may be a friend of God.

Up to this point in Luke’s gospel account he has been showing us what Jesus was doing. So far, we have observed Jesus; taught with the authority of God, possessed power over sickness, creation and death, and was given the authority by God to forgive sin. Luke has been laying the foundation by Jesus’ actions and power that he is the Son of God. No man had ever been able to do what Jesus did before he came to earth or since his ascension to heaven. The conclusion from the evidence presented is Jesus, is in fact, the Son of God.

Luke's account makes it clear that the disciples knew Jesus was no ordinary man as they observed him having power over creation, sickness and death. But they struggled what these observed evidences truly meant concerning who Jesus was. Jesus introduces the most critical question before anyone's life, "Who do say that I am?" The answer determines where a person will spend eternity. Historians, philosophers, secular society, heretical theologians and preachers, false religious systems and denominations, and cults reject God's truth. Even if they accept 80 or 90% of God's truth it means they do not believe in their heart who God the Father or God the Son are and therefore are lost. They accept the lie that twists the eternal truth of God. Last week I used John's statement for the writing of his gospel as the baseline reason of the entire Bible; "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but **these** (*and the entire Bible*) **are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**" (John 20:30-31) By my count there are there are 256 names and adjectives in the Bible used in one way or another to illustrate attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe this is because Jesus is not a man-made god but rather the infinite God, Creator of the Universe is beyond human ability to fully understand. So, God inspired the writers to use all these names and adjectives to give mankind the fullest description possible but even these 256 names and adjectives do not give the complete depth of who Christ is. This morning we read two responses to Jesus' question "Who do you say that I am?" and these two different responses have very different results. Once who Jesus is, was settled, Jesus then gives the disciples prophecy that fulfills prophecy.

Let's pray. Lord bless our time in your Word this morning, may we gain spiritual insight through Your Holy Spirit and may these insights increase our faith, help us know you ever deeper and live more and more for your glory. Amen.

People's Response (v.18-19)

Reading verse 18, "Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say that I am?'" The crowds never questioned if the miracles were real and if it was truly Jesus performing them. It was largely because of the miracles the people followed Jesus and the crowds grew ever larger. The crowds recognized the miracles as supernatural, but as to who Jesus was, they were confused and off the mark. The disciples answered Jesus' question from the rumors that abounded, as is the case when groups of people come together. The disciples had heard the rumors so "they answered, 'John the Baptist.'" After all, was not Jesus preaching a similar message as John and did he not have a similar style of teach as John. So, this led some to hold the opinion that He was John the Baptist resurrected. Now, since it was John the Baptist who baptized Jesus in the Jordan River it was not logical for Jesus to be John. After all, they had both been seen together before Herod beheaded John. But we know from experience that rumors are often not based on fact. However, if they are repeated often enough, over time people will believe. Most false religions are really based on rumors that are not supported by fact, but millions follow.

It appears the second most popular rumor was, "But others say, Elijah." People may have based this opinion on the passage found in Malachi 4:5, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes." "The day of the LORD" represents the end of history and God's judgement. Based this verse their mistake is understandable or at least more understandable

than to think Jesus was John. But again, the scriptures spoke of Jesus. In Daniel we read, “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man (*son of man is the name used for the Messiah*), and he came to the Ancient of Days (*Ancient of Days is the name for God used by Daniel*) and was presented before him.” (Daniel 7:13) One certainly could not have studied Daniel and Isaiah and not have seen the parallel between the prophecies and the life of Jesus.

The final speculation was Jesus was “one of the prophets of old *who had risen.*” This was probably due to His authority in preaching and due to His power to heal and raise the dead. Possibly because the people were not sure who Jesus was is why they had not turned against him as they did in Jerusalem during his last week. He disappointed the people who wanted a king to defeat the Romans and drive them out of Israel. Others wanted a Messiah that would bring prosperity and make Israel economically strong – it was power and material wealth they desired and it became obvious that Jesus was not the messiah they had determined he should be. Some were swayed by the influence of the religious leaders who fought for control.

In John chapter 12 Jesus makes his triumph enter into Jerusalem, he continues teaching the truth including that he would be the sacrifice for people’s sins. He told the people they had no excuse to not know who he was – he was God’s light, the light of salvation. Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.”³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” The people saw the light but preferred the darkness. John explains because of their rejection Jesus “departed and hid himself from them.” John gives 2 reasons why the crowd was

confused as to who Jesus was. First, the people saw and knew the truth, but rejected it and because of their rejection of Christ, God had judicially abandoned them. Continuing in verse 37, “*Though Jesus had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,* ³⁸ *so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: (Isaiah 53:1) ‘Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’*” (John 12:35-38) The people’s persistent rejection of God’s revealed truth through his Son eventually brought God’s judicial hardening of their hearts, minds, eyes and ears so they could not believe.

The second reason is found in verses 42 and 43, “*Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.*” (John 12:42-43) Here we see the power of false religion; the Jewish authorities knew the truth and failed to act on it for fear of the Pharisees. To be put out of the synagogue meant to lose one’s position in society, even their job or business. It was more important to keep their position of authority among the fallen religious system that Israel had become. Like the crowd over time their hearts were hardened until they could not believe. The same is true today.

Today if we were to take a poll, asking the same question, “who is Jesus?” we would get all sorts of answers. Jesus was a teacher and prophet whose life and teachings form the basis of Christianity. Christians believe Jesus to be the Son of God and the Christ. That would be a good answer. However, if you asked people on the street the question as others have, some would probably say, He was a great teacher. Others would say He was a great organizer and leader. Then some would say He is fiction or a made-up figure.

Albert Schweitzer was a musician, theologian, pastor and medical doctor. He received the Noble Prize in 1953. People respected him and even idolized him. He seemed to contradict himself in his opinions when it came to the identity of Jesus. Even though he had studied the Scriptures, like the crowds and the Pharisees he was not sure who Jesus was. Some of his writings are doctrinally sound, while others are completely off the mark and this means he did not truly know. One such example is found in Schweitzer's *Quest for the Historical Jesus*, chapter 20, page 399, he wrote, "There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the Life of Jesus. The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, **never had any existence**. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb." One should not stress at such a false opinion for it is one of many by those who do not know the true Jesus. Man's opinion is shaped by the lure of the world – material wealth, power, peer group acceptance and self-indulgent sin and meant to keep people from accepting the truth until they become hardened against God's truth. The real issue is not what people think, but the true issue is what does God's Word say. To get to the true answer one needs to seek it in the Word of God that eternal truth.

Peter's Response (v. 20)

Jesus listened to the disciples give answers as to who the crowds thought Jesus was and then says to them, "But who do you say that I am?' And Peter answered, 'The Christ of God.'" Here is an amazing truth concerning the identity of Jesus. What the crowds saw was much the same as what Peter and the disciples saw. The crowd saw Jesus perform miracles and so did Peter and the

disciples. They heard Jesus preach and so did the 12. They saw Jesus lift the bread up to heaven and pray and fed over 5000 and so did Peter and the disciples. What made the difference?

In order to see this clearly, we must look to Matthew's account of this same story. In chapter 16 we read the following, Jesus said to the disciples **“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.’** (Matthew 16:15-17) What exactly is Jesus saying to Peter? He is saying, “Peter, you received your answer from a difference source than public opinion. Peter your answer was given to you by my Father, God. Both immediate and lasting truth comes from God not the corrupt hearts of mankind. If God had not revealed this truth to Peter, he might have answered as the others, **“a prophet of old who has risen.”** The disciple's faith would fluctuate at times during the remainder of Jesus' ministry, between his death and resurrection; at times their faith was strong and at times weak, but they never vacillated on who Jesus was – the Christ, Son of God.

A disciple came to his teacher's home one night, feeling unworthy and feeling weak in his faith in Jesus. He said to his teacher, “No matter how much I pray, study and try, I know I am not worthy and I have weak faith in Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I am working hard to please the Lord, but fall short, I am afraid I will lose my salvation.” The teacher said to his disciple, “Do you see that dog laying on the rug? He is my dog. He is house-trained and never makes a mess. Also, he is obedient, he does not chew things up or dig holes – he is a delight and a great companion. Now, look over at the kitchen floor and you will see my baby son. He makes messes, he is teething and chewing and drooling on everything. He

fouls his clothes and diapers – one might say he is a complete mess. But let me ask you this, who is going to inherit all I own? Certainly not my dog, but my son. Then he said to his disciple, You are Jesus' heir because he died for you, adopted you and even though you are a mess at times, Jesus loves you and by his grace you have been saved – it is all by his grace, not because you can earn it.” I think this story is like the disciples and like you and me we believe in Jesus, nothing can take that from us, and even though we are a mess at times - his love is unfailing.

Jesus' Response (v.21-22)

After Jesus had listened to the disciples and Peter and knowing that their hearts and minds were locked onto the knowledge that he was the Christ of God, ²¹ “he strictly charged and commanded them to **tell this to no one,** ²² saying, ‘**The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.**’” Since it was not the ordained time the disciples were to tell no one. Luke records Jesus' words that had been hinted at in the Old Testament and is the main point of the New; Jesus must be killed by the Jewish leaders and rejected by the people in order that on the day chosen from eternity past he would be killed and then raised from the dead on the 3rd day and live eternally. Jesus met all the prophecies of the Old Testament he had every right to rule because he is the legal heir to David's throne. Isaiah prophesied, “**Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.**” (Isaiah 7:14) Neither before Jesus nor since has anyone ever been born in this manner. If you take the time to read Isaiah chapter 53 the prophet predicts the unique life of Jesus and no one can read it, even Jewish scholars, and not see Isaiah's prophecies about the Messiah were fulfilled in the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus says, **“The Son of Man must suffer”** the word “must” is emphatic. Meaning this has been God’s plan from before creation. It is the only way to bring God’s plan of salvation to mankind. Later, Peter is recorded in the Book of Acts verifying God’s eternal plan, ²³ **“This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning him, (Psalm 16:8-11) ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; ²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. ²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’”** (Acts 2:23-28) At this point the disciples may have been taken back, shocked and even their hopes dashed – Jesus was not the Messiah that would usher in an earthly kingdom or rule over nations. Jesus came **“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** (2 Corinthians 5:21) Because Jesus came as prophesied, lived, died and was raised as prophesied we know he is the Christ. For those who believe in Jesus as the Christ the verses prior to Paul’s great proclamation here in verse 21 is true for believers. These prior verses spoke to my heart as an early believer, just as they do this morning. Beginning in verse 17 of 2 Corinthians chapter 5, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”** When God saved me and like the disciple of the teacher who thought he could not be good enough to deserve Christ and that he might lose his salvation this verse said to me God had made me into something new and being a new creation meant God the Holy Spirit would continue making me ever more into what God the Father desires. Paul continues, ¹⁸ **“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us**

the ministry of reconciliation;¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” Because of Christ, God forgave my trespasses and sins and reconciled me back to him, my Creator had restored me as his child through Christ. Because of this great blessing, because I am now God’s child then my life is to be lived as a message of reconciliation and²⁰ “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20) My beloved is this how you are living? Yes, we are weak at times – like the disciples, but we are unbendable in our belief that Jesus is the Christ and our Savior and as such, God will use us as his ambassadors if we submit and trust our lives to Christ. The question before each person throughout history, before each of us is, “Who do you believe Jesus Christ is?” This is the most important question is all of history and is the most important question for each person, for it is the question of – salvation or damnation. What does the Word of God tell you? What does your heart know as God invades it with the truth of his Word and his Holy Spirit to make you a new creation?

Here is my answer - I declare - Jesus is the Christ, the living Son of God the Father! Amen! So be it!