

“Who I am is What I do”

Scripture: Mark 8:27-33

Graphic: questions, cross, Jesus

Key Verses: 8:29 He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”

Theme: Who Jesus is and what he does was misinterpreted by the disciples until after His resurrection. Don't try to fit your idea of Jesus into Jesus' role. Instead, fit your life and what you do into the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Live into the salvation that God offers through Christ.

1) Introduction

- a) Last week, we stood on the bank of the Jordan River as we witnessed the baptism of Jesus. We actually saw and felt the muddy water of Jesus' baptism. And we had the opportunity to even get some of the muddy water on us. The muddy water we used represented the muddy water of Jesus' baptism that stays on us as baptized Christians that confess Jesus as Messiah.
- b) And even though we sometimes try to wash it off, it fades, or we cover it up, our baptisms leave on us a visible representation of the righteousness of God...the revealed will of God for our lives. For Jesus and for us, this marking calls us to obedience to the will of God in our lives...
- c) Today, as we open our Bibles to Mark Chapter 8, we find ourselves standing with Jesus and the disciples a few years later...and we hear Jesus define His role as the Messiah, the Anointed One, in terms that we sometimes have a hard time swallowing...and so did the disciples, especially Peter.
- d) Even though they've spent time with Jesus and think they know who he is, Jesus, as they will find out, is way more – way different – than what they expected...
- e) The challenge for us this morning as we engage in this is to more fully understand Jesus through his obedience to the Father, the story of his life on earth, and His divine calling to offer salvation through His life, death, and beyond...to understand that who Jesus is becomes more fully alive for us when we understand what Jesus does...
- f) Turn with me to Mark 8, starting in Chapter 27...
- g) Let's pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read Mark 8:27-28

- i) Jesus wants to know what people are saying about him...
- ii) Look, Jesus has come into contact with lots of people from all walks of life and all cultures, for almost three years...he healed sick people and made dead people rise...he made blind people see and deaf people hear...there was that one time when people wanted to kill him...he ate with sinners (!)...he drove out demons...he fed thousands of people...performed miracles and signs of wonder...he proclaimed that the kingdom of God is near...and he called people to repent and believe in God...
- iii) But he wanted to know WHO people were saying he was! Must have been the perplexed look on their faces when he said they had to give up their lives to keep them...or that blessed are those who mourn...or if you want to follow me you have to deny yourself...
- iv) The things that Jesus had been saying were hard to understand...especially for the people around Jesus who didn't have the benefit of 2,000 years of theology and Bible study...
- v) Who do people say that I am? And the disciples' honest answer was, "It's all over the map, Jesus. People don't have any clue, for sure, who you are!" Maybe John the Baptist, come back to life. Maybe Elijah back to save us. Maybe just a prophet...
- vi) In some ways, I think Jesus knew the answer would be just that. He just wanted to see how aware the disciples were of their world and surroundings. He wanted to know what people were saying.
- vii) We have opportunities everyday to be more aware of our surroundings, just like the disciples. This question from Jesus is a question for us... "Who do the people around you say that Jesus is?"
- viii) Because, as we will see, until each one of us, and the church, understands who Jesus is, then we'll have a very difficult time explaining the hope that we have in the salvation that he offers.
- ix) But Jesus leaves that question for the moment and turns directly to the disciples...verse 29...

b) Read verses 29-30

- i) After hearing what other people are saying about Him, Jesus looks the disciples in the eyes, so to speak, and asks, “But who do YOU say that I am?”
- ii) As I was talking about this passage this week with some guys in the Band of Brothers, one of them remarked, “If I were one of the disciples, and Jesus asked a question, I would keep my mouth shut for just a moment, because I just know that Peter would speak up and say something.” Sometimes, Peter has to put his foot in his mouth when he speaks. This, apparently, is not one of those times, though because Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah. In the NIV, it reads, “You are the Christ”
- iii) During Advent, you’ll remember, we talked about the term Messiah, the Anointed One...the one who carries out and fulfills God’s plan of salvation for God’s people.
- iv) Peter understood this role – this status – of Messiah to be the culmination of the prophecies and promises that God made to the Jewish people. Jesus was, by all appearances, and by His own confession, the Anointed One, the Son of God, the Messiah.
- v) And so Peter confidently blurts of this confession... and the rest of the disciples, were kind of holding their breath (like, what is Jesus going to say?...)
- vi) And, I’m sure, Peter is now thinking that Jesus is going to affirm him and say thank you and good boy...but instead, Jesus tells the disciples, actually sternly warned them or rebuked them, not to tell anyone about him.
- vii) Isn’t that the same thing he said to the demons that confessed Jesus as Son of God in Mark 3:12?!?!
- viii) Curious! Why would Jesus say this? Well, basically, it’s not the right time yet. God’s revealed plan has to take on more shape before the disciples and others could confess that Jesus was the Messiah.
- ix) And because it wasn’t time yet, the disciples had an incomplete understanding of what it meant to be the Messiah. Peter knew the Old Testament prophecies, but Jesus is so much more than merely the fulfillment of their hope for a King.

- x) And because Peter likes to put his foot in his mouth, and Jesus may have wanted to prevent any further confusion (as evidenced by their answer to his FIRST question), he warned them to keep silent.
- xi) Whatever the reason Jesus chose to keep them quiet, and here's the important part, Jesus DOES NOT reject the title! He receives the title as Messiah, but just not publically yet.
- xii) And now Jesus goes on to explain a little more about what he will do, and this will give the disciples and us more understanding of who He is...

c) Read verses 31-33

- i) What it means to be the Messiah, the Son of Man, is a far cry from what Peter and the disciples expected from Jesus. Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine...he's connected fully into both realms. And Jesus, here, begins to openly to reveal the truth of God's plan for the salvation of the world – that, as Messiah – as the Son of Man - Jesus would suffer. That, as the Son of Man, Jesus would be rejected. That, as the Son of Man, Jesus would be murdered. Yet, as the Son of Man, Jesus would again after three days.
- ii) And you can just see the jaws drop on the disciples. “What is he talking about?” “Peter, say something”, right? ☺ ‘Cause none of the rest of them knew what to say...
- iii) And Peter “took Jesus aside”, literally, grabbed Jesus by the arm or sleeve, and took Him aside.
- iv) Ever have a parent do that to you in public – take you aside? I won't ask what you did to deserve it! Kind of embarrassing, right?
- v) Here's Jesus – the ONE PETER JUST CONFESSED AS MESSIAH – being pulled into the corner so he could get a tongue-lashing from Peter.
- vi) It's bad enough when we get pulled aside by a parent or boss for correction, can you imagine reversing that? Think about a boss you've had. Now, think about pulling him or her aside and rebuking them like you own the place...
- vii) Not good, right? Here's Peter, pulling his teacher aside to rebuke him about the things Jesus has just said.

- viii) Gentle Jesus? Calm, soft-spoken Jesus? No way!
- ix) Here's what happened: Jesus got pretty red in the face, probably. Looks OVER at the disciples so that he KNEW he had their attention (as if they could look away). Then unleashes on Peter this rebuke to end all rebukes!
- x) "Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking about things of THIS world, not the things of God, which I have been teaching you for three years!"
- xi) Jesus uses the term "Satan" here as in 'adversary' – that which is completely against the will of God.
- xii) It's like, "Don't you dare rebuke me...you have no idea what I will go through..." And what Jesus would go through for the salvation of the world – the suffering, the rejection, the death, and the resurrection – would be the things that defined what being the Messiah truly is.
- xiii) And eventually, even Peter, first through denial of Jesus and fear, then through Jesus' restoration and grace, would understand what his confession that day meant for his salvation and the salvation of the Jews, the Gentiles, and the whole world.

3) Application

- a) One of the really cool things about being a pastor in the United Methodist Church is that we get to move around as God directs and the bishop and cabinet discern. With that comes many challenges and many blessings, which we are all experiencing this year as this church has had a change of appointment.
- b) Now, Stacy and the kids and I have been here now for like six months – can you believe it's already been six months? And I think I've done an OK job getting to know names and faces...I can probably even tell you, generally, what you do – for a job, whether you are retired, if you have kids, generally, where you live...basic facts about you.
- c) ☺ And for some people, that's just about all they want the pastor to know, right?
- d) But, if that's all I know about you, then I don't really know you, do I? Some of you have known others in the community for 70 or 80 years...and you know ALMOST everything about each other. But since I've only been here six months, I really only know the facts...

- e) The same goes for me...you know that I hold the office of pastor. And you may know certain things about me from conversations or Facebook or whatever...
- f) And the title Pastor, for you, has a certain set of characteristics that goes with it...things that I do. Chances are, though, just like I don't know everything that you do, you don't know everything that I do. We don't really know each other that well, even though we have certain assumptions and expectations of each other because of who we THINK each other is. Our understanding of each other is incomplete.
- g) And the answer to this dilemma is spending time truly getting to know each other so that we don't make false assumptions or have misplaced expectations.
- h) Peter's incomplete understanding of Jesus led him into some hot water. He used the phrase "Messiah" in the way he understood, but which happened to be inappropriate, according to Jesus. He assumed he knew what 'Messiah' meant.
- i) What's worse is that in our culture, today, it's not so much a matter of using the terms we use to describe Jesus in incomplete ways...we often face the problem that the terms used for Jesus have NO MEANING AT ALL.
- j) PHEME PERKINS comments that, "The difficulty is not that [the titles for Jesus] might convey inappropriate expectations about the ministry of Jesus but that they do not convey any expectations at all. ... We should think of 'Messiah', 'Son of God', and 'Son of Man'...as code words for stories of how salvation comes to be present in human life through Jesus."
- k) We so often speak the names of Jesus and forget to assign to those names the richness of why or how Jesus got that title...like Messiah or Son of God.
- l) Who Jesus is can only be defined for us fully in what Jesus did for us. Until we know more fully what Jesus did for us and why, our understanding of who Jesus is TO US is incomplete. The titles and names for Jesus Christ have meaning when we remember and relive the amazing elements of the story of Jesus.
- m) I had a brother in my office this week and I asked the question, "What do you do?" Because in order to find out who he is more deeply, as a brother in Christ, I also wanted to hear the story about what he does.

- n) We, like the disciples, don't fully understand Jesus. And like the disciples, we often try to take our image of Jesus and somehow fit that into our established lives. Sometimes it's a square peg in a round hole. Instead of taking the time to challenge ourselves to fit our lives into the story of Jesus, we settle for having Jesus be who we are comfortable with.
- o) Here's what I would challenge is to do today:
- i) Pray that we would be open to what God wants for us as a church, and not be trying to force God to do what we want. Simply open ourselves to God in worship, in discipleship, in mission. Jesus was open and obedient to the Father.
 - ii) #2, Take any suffering in your life, for whatever reason, and allow God to turn that into a learning and growth experience for God. We suffer emotionally, physically, spiritually, whatever... Jesus suffered and died as an act of obedience to God.
 - iii) #3, Spend time reading the Bible to more fully understand Jesus and your own salvation. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide that whole process as you become more self-aware of Jesus in your life. During Lent, this year, I will be leading a Bible Study about the cross called 24 Hours that Changed the World. This is our chance to learn more about the fullness of the cross of Jesus. The disciples would get their chance to understand Jesus as the events surrounding the cross unfolded.
 - iv) Finally, ask the people in your life, those at work or your family to tell you their story. It's only as we experience other people's stories do we understand how God is working in their lives and can be encouraged and encouraging to them. This is our call as the people of God.

4) Conclusion

- a) I don't want this sermon to be about trying harder to be a Christian.
- b) Peter tried really hard to say the right things, do the right things, and be the right kind of person in light of his understanding of who Jesus was.
- c) And he fell short, until after Jesus' resurrection, when he allowed the whole story of Jesus to play out in his life.
- d) You may have come to some understanding of who Jesus is to you...of what it means to be saved by grace through faith.

- e) We can fairly easily grasp, as the disciples did, the Jesus of miracles and teachings. Our challenge is to also richly understand the passion and resurrection of Jesus...
- f) Allow the full story of Jesus to continue to become one with the story of your life so that Who YOU are is not only about what you do, but what JESUS has done, and will do through you...
- g) Let's pray...