

Pentecost 5

June 19, 2016

Text: Luke 9:18-24

Theme: Who do you say Jesus is?

What should I eat today? What will you wear when you go home and change out of your church clothes? Should I stop for gas on my way home or wait until tomorrow? These are important questions that we face in our day-to-day lives. They are somewhat mundane in that there is no truly right or wrong answer, unless of course your delaying of the filling up with gas would result in running out of said gas on the way home. There are more important questions in life than these and today we consider perhaps the most important question in your life, **who do you say Jesus is?**

In our text, Jesus began by asking his disciples for insight into what the people were saying about him, something that if you look just a few verses earlier in chapter nine was also a debate in the halls of the palace of Herod the Tetrarch. The disciples nailed the answer as to how Jesus was perceived by the people, saying that he was seen as John the Baptist raised from the dead, or perhaps Elijah or another of the prophets. Do you see the common connection? Aside from being from the past, all of these also place an incredible limit on Jesus as someone who is but a mortal. He's a prophet. What the people couldn't find in their own consideration of Jesus from what they had heard from him or about him from others, was one who would be the Messiah of their dreams.

But Jesus wasn't satisfied with that answer. He wanted more, and no doubt, this is where he wanted to get to all along. Jesus knew what the crowds of people believed about him. He had heard and seen it all too often. But was he hitting the mark with those closest to home? Of course in reality Jesus knew this too, but wanted to reassure his disciples by giving them a chance to put it into words. **What about you? Who do you say that I am?** And Peter answered for the group, **you are the Christ of God.** There was a complete picture about who Jesus is. Jesus may not have been the Messiah that the people of his day were dreaming of, but in the disciples mind, he is the Messiah they so desperately needed. That comes through when Peter says, **you are the Christ**, that is the anointed one, the way of saying Messiah in Greek. Peter had it right. Jesus is the one whom God anointed to do what God had foretold from the beginning, to crush the head of the serpent (*Genesis 3:15*) and save the people from their sins.

Yet today, many people see Jesus as the Messiah of their dreams. In fact, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and the New Age Movement today all find in Jesus a good teacher. Mormonism finds in Jesus a perfect example for us to follow in order that we can earn our way to heaven. Many Christians today find in Jesus someone who has done most of what was necessary for salvation, we simply need to build on what he did by our own decision or works. In so doing they have made him into a Messiah of their own dreams. Today, many find in him a politically correct Messiah, one who not only eats with sinners as we heard last week, but accepts their continuing life of sin and have thus emptied Jesus' work and power in their lives.

Jesus did not come to this world to rescue good people or people who would rationalize away sin. He did not come to get the ball of our salvation rolling toward heaven for us to complete the work. He did not come to reveal to us an ever-changing Word from a God that takes direction from mankind. Rather, he came to rescue completely lost souls in whom there is nothing good from sin and its eternal consequences. He came to reveal God's changeless Word to rational mankind. He came to be the manifestation of God's love to a world utterly lost in their sins, hopeless and deserving eternal condemnation. He came as God's anointed solution to the problem of sin in the world. The problem's we face in this world, we face not because our God is too small. No we face them, because sinful mankind has made the problem of our sins so small and built our own selves up and thus minimized Jesus' work and limited it's significance in our lives. About those things, God says, **Watch out!** (*Romans 16:7*)

There are mundane questions in life. We answer them everyday without even thinking about them. But the most important question in life is, **who do you say Jesus is?** Either you have this right and are saved for all eternity or you blow it and will stand condemned at the great and final day. Jesus is **the Christ of God**, our only Savior from all sins and the only way that we can approach God in this life and dwell with him in the next.