

His One and Only Son

4/7 of Series 3:16

John 3: 16

08-23-2009 Sam Jones Memorial United Methodist Church

Introduction

One day Jesus and the disciples were traveling in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way, the Lord suddenly asked his friends, “*Who do people say that I am?*” The disciples began to recount all the various rumors they had heard about Jesus’ identity. “*Some say John the Baptist raised from the dead; others say Elijah, and still others, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.*”

Then Jesus looked at each of them in turn and asked, “*But what about you? Who do YOU say that I am?*” (See Matthew 16: 13-20)

I. Who is Jesus?

The same question continues to echo in our ears today: “*Who do YOU say that I am?*” How we answer that question defines each of our lives—both now and forevermore. So **who is Jesus?**

Over the centuries, people have responded to this question in a variety of ways. Some refer to Jesus of Nazareth as a historical figure, much like one would discuss the lives of other influential characters such as Julius Caesar, Michelangelo, Queen Elizabeth, or Mahatma Gandhi. Others think of Jesus as a religious teacher and moral example. Some religions go so far as to declare that he was a prophet among other prophets sent from God.

On that day outside of Caesarea Philippi, however, Simon Peter dared to answer: “*You are the Christ, the son of the living God!*” The Christ or the Messiah—the promised one sent by God to save Israel. The son of the living God present on earth.

Today we come to a critical phrase in John 3:16: “*For God so loved the world that he gave **his one and only Son** . . .*” Who is Jesus? He is the one and only Son of God! At his birth, the angels gave him the name “*Emmanuel*” which means “*God with us.*” He is God’s own Son come to earth to save his people.

Jesus of Nazareth was **fully human**. He understands what it means to live in a fallen world. We have a Savior who can empathize with our struggles and sorrows. Hebrews 4:15 reminds us: “*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.*”

Jesus the Christ was **fully divine**. The prologue of John’s Gospel declares: “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” (John 1:14)

Colossians 2:9 declares: “*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.*” Eugene Peterson’s The Message paraphrases this passage to say: “*Everything of God gets expressed in Christ, so you can see and hear him clearly. You don’t need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him. When you come to him, that fullness comes together for you, too. His power extends over everything.*”

Last week I discussed how *The Apostles Creed* is a summary of our core, Christian beliefs. The creed helps answer the question of Jesus' identity:

"I believe . . . in Jesus Christ his (God's) only Son our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

II. I Am

"Who do you say that I am?" A number of different names, images, and titles help us answer that question. We know Jesus as:

- Master
- Savior
- Redeemer
- Deliverer
- Lord
- Messiah
- Christ
- The Word
- The Son of God
- The Lamb of God
- The fairest of ten thousand
- The bright and morning star

Another way to answer the question is to examine how Jesus identified himself. In John's Gospel, Jesus used seven statements to describe himself that began with the words *"I am."* Jesus said:

❖ *"I am the bread of life."* (John 6:35).

There is a hunger within each of our lives that cannot be filled by the things of this world. We seek meaning, purpose, and identity. The French scientist, Pascal, wrote about a *"God shaped vacuum"* in the human soul that can only be filled by the Holy Spirit's presence. Jesus said: *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

❖ *"I am the light of the world."* (John 8:12)

Jesus Christ shines as God's light in a world of darkness. In the prologue of John's Gospel, the author declares: *"In him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it."* (John 1: 4-5) God's Word is light unto our feet and lamp unto our path. We never need walk in the darkness again. The Lord grants us direction and purpose in living. Jesus said: *"Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

❖ *"I am the door/gate."* (John 10:7)

The United Methodist Church recently launched a nationwide ad campaign with the tagline *Rethink Church*. The website address is 10thousanddoors.org, and it describes the many ways that folk enter into faith and church. We all come to God in our own unique, individual ways. However, Jesus is THE door and gate that ushers us into the Father's presence. We do not come in fear and trembling but with faith and assurance.

Hebrews 10:19 says that we can come before God's throne with boldness and confidence in the name of Jesus Christ!

❖ *"I am the good shepherd."* (John 10:11)

One of the most powerful images of Scripture describes Jesus as the good shepherd who lays down his life for the flock. The words of Psalm 23 describe God's pastoral care of his people. All we like sheep have gone astray, but the Good Shepherd seeks and saves the lost. Then he binds our wounds and restores our lives. Like a lamb in a shepherd's strong arms, our God holds us now and forever more.

❖ *"I am the resurrection and the life."* (John 11:25)

Those who accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord share in the benefits of his life, death, and resurrection. At the cross, our old, sinful self is put to death. At the empty tomb, we are raised to new life. God gives us three-fold life: life, abundant life, and everlasting life. We are given the assurance of life after death AND life before death.

❖ *"I am the way, the truth, and the life."* (John 14:6)

On the night before his death, Jesus met with his followers in an upper room in Jerusalem. He tried to prepare his friends for the events about to unfold. He assured them with the words: *"You know the way to the place where I am going."* Thomas plaintively protested, *"Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"* Jesus replied with one of the most memorable passages of the gospels: *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* One of the earliest titles given to the Christian faith was *"The Way."* In Christ, God has done a new thing once and for all.

❖ *"I am the true vine."* (John 15:1)

Jesus used a common, agricultural image of a grape vine. He told his disciples: *"I am the vine; you are the branches."* We are called to abide in the Spirit's presence. Then we will naturally bear the fruit of the Spirit and Christian living. Apart from Christ, we can do nothing.

Each name, title, and image gives us a glimpse into Christ's character, identity, and nature. During the various ages and stages of life, one might speak to us more strongly than another. At times, we experience to the depths of our soul what it means to know Jesus Christ as the bread of life, the light of the world, the door/gate, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, and the life, and the true vine.

III. Savior and Lord

Two other meaningful titles often used for Jesus are **"Savior"** and **"Lord."** The names speak to two aspects of the Christian experience.

❖ **Savior**

A Christian author once wrote: *“If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior!”* (Copied)

Declaring that Jesus is **Savior** recognizes that we cannot save ourselves. There is nothing we can do to make right what is wrong. But while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. This proves God’s love toward us. The first and last word of the Gospel is always grace: God’s gracious gift. We are saved both *“from”* and *“for.”*

✓ From Sin	For Forgiveness
✓ From Death	For Life
✓ From the World	For Heaven
✓ From Time	For Ever

❖ Lord

The second title is **“Lord.”** In fact, we often combine the two together *“Savior and Lord”* because they describe the process of salvation. Once we know Jesus Christ as our Savior then the process begins of allowing the Holy Spirit to be Lord of our lives. We place everything under God’s power and authority. This is both event and process as we begin the lifelong process of being *“changed from glory unto glory till in heaven we take our place.”*

John Wesley called this the process of sanctification or Christian perfection. We may sing *“Just as I Am”* but we dare not stay *“Just as I Was.”* We may share the testimony of the man who said: *“I ain’t what I ought to be but thank God that I’m not what I was!”*

IV. One Solitary Life

“Who do you say that I am?” When we know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, the answer changes our lives in the same way that it has transformed the world. James Allen Francis wrote about the impact of Jesus’ life in *One Solitary Life*.

“He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant. He grew up in another village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was 30. Then, for three years, he was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn’t go to college. He never lived in a big city. He never traveled 200 miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

He was only 33 when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his garments, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave, through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race. I am well within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever march, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned—put together—have not affected the life of humanity on this earth as much as that one, solitary life.” (*Attributed to James Allen Francis*)

Conclusion

The late Dr. S. M. Lockeridge once preached a sermon entitled “*That’s My King!*” Hear how he answers the question: “*Who do you say that I am?*”

"That's My King"

The late Dr. S. M. Lockeridge

My King was born King. The Bible says He's a Seven Way King. He's the King of the Jews - that's an Ethnic King. He's the King of Israel - that's a National King. He's the King of righteousness. He's the King of the ages. He's the King of Heaven. He's the King of glory. He's the King of kings and He is the Lord of lords. Now that's my King.

Well, I wonder if you know Him. Don't try to mislead me. Do you know my King? David said the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. My King is the only one of whom there are no means of measure that can define His limitless love. No far seeing telescope can bring into visibility the coastline of the shore of His supplies. No barriers can hinder Him from pouring out His blessing.

He's enduringly strong. He's entirely sincere. He's eternally steadfast. He's immortally graceful. He's imperially powerful. He's impartially merciful. That's my King. He's God's Son. He's the sinner's savior. He's the centerpiece of civilization. He stands alone in Himself. He's honest. He's unique. He's unparalleled. He's unprecedented. He's supreme. He's pre-eminent. He's the grandest idea in literature. He's the highest personality in philosophy. He's the supreme problem in higher criticism. He's the fundamental doctrine of historic theology. He's the carnal necessity of spiritual religion. That's my King.

He's the miracle of the age. He's the superlative of everything good that you choose to call Him. He's the only one able to supply all our needs simultaneously. He supplies strength for the weak. He's available for the tempted and the tried. He sympathizes and He saves. He's the Almighty God who guides and keeps all his people. He heals the sick. He cleanses the lepers. He forgives sinners. He discharged debtors. He delivers the captives. He defends the feeble. He blesses the young. He serves the unfortunate. He regards the aged. He rewards the diligent and He beautifies the meek. That's my King.

Do you know Him? Well, my King is a King of knowledge. He's the wellspring of wisdom. He's the doorway of deliverance. He's the pathway of peace. He's the roadway of righteousness. He's the highway of holiness. He's the gateway of glory. He's the master of the mighty. He's the captain of the conquerors. He's the head of the heroes. He's the leader of the legislatures. He's the overseer of the overcomers. He's the governor of governors. He's the prince of princes. He's the King of kings and He's the Lord of lords. That's my King.

His office is manifold. His promise is sure. His light is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His Word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. I wish I could describe Him to you . . . but He's indescribable. That's my King. He's incomprehensible, He's invincible, and He is irresistible.

The heavens of heavens can't contain Him, let alone some man explain Him. You can't get Him out of your mind. You can't get Him off of your hands. You can't outlive Him and you can't live without Him. The Pharisees couldn't stand Him, but they found out they couldn't stop Him. Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him. The witnesses couldn't get their testimonies to agree about Him. Herod couldn't kill Him. Death couldn't handle Him and the grave couldn't hold Him. That's my King.

He always has been and He always will be. I'm talking about the fact that He had no predecessor and He'll have no successor. There's nobody before Him and there'll be nobody after Him. You can't impeach Him and He's not going to resign. That's my King! That's my King!

Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Well, all the power belongs to my King. We're around here talking about black power and white power and green power, but in the end all that matters is God's power. Thine is the power. Yeah. And the glory. We try to get prestige and honor and glory for ourselves, but the glory is all His. Yes. Thine is the Kingdom and the power and glory, forever and ever and ever and ever. How long is that? Forever and ever and ever and ever. . . And when you get through with all of the ever's, then . . . *Amen!*