

Copyright August 30, 2020. Geist Christian Church. All Rights Reserved.

Title: Jesus Said What!?! When Jesus Said Get Lost

Preaching: Danny Gulden, Lead Pastor, Promise Road Campus

Text: [Matthew 16:21-28](#)

E-mail: [Danny Gulden](#)



What does it mean for you and me to claim Jesus as the Messiah?

Peter believes he has claimed Jesus as the Messiah. When Peter makes this claim, he has in his mind and his spirit what a Messiah was supposed to be like and what a Messiah was supposed to do. Peter believed that Jesus would be

a warrior-king, much like his ancestor David. Most believed that was what the world needed at that moment.

The Roman Empire had taken over people's lives, imposing Roman law, taxing people beyond any reasonable measure, and using violence to enforce their rule. People were desperate for rescue. So many, including Peter, believe that Jesus as Messiah, and as Messiah could overcome the Roman Empire and save them. People also believed that he would have to use force and would need to be willing to inflict greater violence, that this was the only way.

But that's not what Jesus had in mind. It's not what God had in mind. You see, Jesus is a different kind of messiah, a different kind of savior. It's why Jesus says this to Peter as Peter is trying to understand what Jesus is doing and what it means to follow Jesus.

But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." (Matthew 16:23)

Peter is much like you and me. Jesus has introduced a different idea about what a Messiah should be. He is introducing a way of life, a way of ordering the world, that is rooted in love, mercy, forgiveness, peace, justice for all, and grace. He is challenging the dominant way the world works and Peter is having a difficult time imagining a different way of life. He is having trouble imagining that Jesus would give his life for the kingdom of God. I believe that there are two questions Jesus is raising here that continue to challenge us today

Are we ready for something different? AND Are we ready for something more?

A National Park ranger was recently interviewed for an article and the interviewer wanted to know the most common question that visitors to the park ask. Many people, he said, come to the park to hike one of the beautiful trails that wander through the forest, trails designed to display the magnificent trees and plants, to let the hikers encounter the array of wildlife in the forest, and to take hikers on to hilltops for breathtaking views of the countryside. But the most frequent question that visitors ask the forest rangers is not "Where does this trail go?" or "How long does it take to hike it?" or "Do we need bug spray on the trail" but instead "can you tell me where the trail starts?" It makes sense. No matter how lovely or breathtaking a trail may be, if you don't know where the trail starts, you can't hike it.

You may be wondering today, why Jesus would tell us to Get Lost to find the beginning of the trail. But that's exactly what Jesus is saying:

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 16:24-25)

You see, we want just a little more of what already is here, of what is already offered. We believe if we can just acquire a little more, do a little more, we can and will and achieve our way into being a faithful disciple. But Jesus is clear: the something more we are looking for is not something that we can acquire or achieve. Discipleship is not about our achievements or our acquisitions.

Several years ago, I was with a church group on a mission trip in the Appalachia area of Kentucky, in a place called Rattlesnake Ridge. We were working on a house that sat in the middle of a row of houses that looked pretty similar. Someone needed to get on the roof of the house to do a quick repair. I'm afraid of heights, afraid of climbing ladders, however, I decided during our lunch break I would seek to overcome that fear. I went over and grabbed a ladder and while everyone else was eating lunch, I put the ladder up on the side of the house and began to climb to the roof. Step by step, slowly, deep hesitation with each step. I reached the roof and gave a Rocky Balboa top of the stairs like celebration.

Several from our group came over and asked what I was doing on the roof. *"I said, I climbed up here to do the work we needed to do on the roof. I climbed the ladder, got on the roof, It's a big deal."* Someone said it is, except that you climbed onto the wrong roof. *"You are on the roof of the house next door to the house we are working on."*

As I thought about that moment this week, these words from Thomas Merton came to mind: *"People may spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success only to find, once they reach the top, that the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall."*

How often have we settled for something that isn't life-giving?

Jesus invites us to imagine what our lives can be like, but instead, we fall back to familiar patterns that do not give us life. Just like Peter, we can only see how Jesus fits into our current ways of life and ordering the world, rather than seeing how Jesus asks us to live differently and to see the world differently. We are determined to keep climbing up the wrong ladder. We become determined not to make room for God to order our lives differently.

I love how Eugene Peterson frames Jesus' words in his paraphrase Bible the message.

In his paraphrase, Jesus tells Peter, "you have no idea of how God works." Following Jesus requires us to learn how God works.

We all desire to find true life. I believe we come to church, we come to any religious community because we are ready for something different and we are ready for something more. We want to find true life and we believe that our faith in God can offer us this true life, that our lives can be aligned with the way God works.

But too often, the church, the big C church has failed to help us imagine what that type of life looks like. Too often, the church has simply looked like the rest of life. It's hard to ask people to imagine a different way of life when the church fails to ask itself to imagine a different way of life.

Jesus is clear: To find true life, you have to get lost. To find your life, to find true life, we must first let go of that which prevents us from imagining a different way of life.

To claim Jesus as Messiah, what is it you need to let go of, so that you can imagine a new way of life, one where we see:

That God is at work in your life and the world.

That we as a church have much to offer the community.

That it makes a difference when we befriend those who are lonely and comfort those who are grieving.

That it matters when we stand up for justice and give voice to the voiceless.

That acts, even the smallest acts of love and generosity can change the world.

That love is more powerful than hate.

That life is more powerful than death, that God that raised Jesus from the dead is still in the business of bringing new life.

Are you ready for something different?

Are you ready for something more?

If so, Jesus says: Get Lost

Will you pray with me?