

Copyright March 14, 2021. Geist Christian Church. All Rights Reserved.

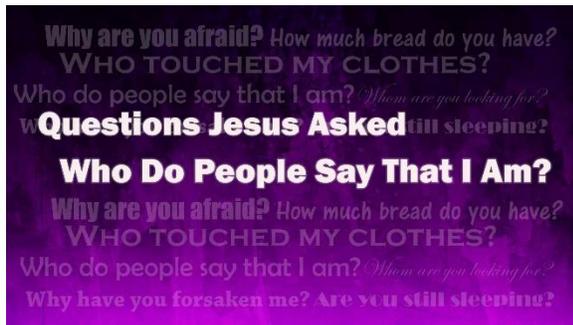
Title: Questions Jesus Asked: Who Do People Say That I Am?

Preaching: Danny Gulden, Lead Pastor, Promise Road Campus

Text: [Mark 8:27-30](#)

E-mail: [Danny Gulden](#)

[Watch the service.](#)



"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and we proclaim him Lord and Savior of our Lives"

This is the affirmation of faith that we shared at the end of worship services in the previous congregation in which I served. It's the affirmation we share here on New Member Sundays when

someone joins Geist Christian Church.

A few years ago, after a worship service, a young person, 6 years old, came up to me following the service. At this congregation, children were in worship for the end of the service and so he had heard this affirmation regularly. His mom told me that he had a question for me and I love questions from kids because they often ask the best questions about faith. He said, "I want to ask you a question about the affirmation at the end of worship. What does it mean for Jesus to be the crust? Every week we say that Jesus is the crust, the son of the living God and we proclaim him Lord and Savior of our lives. If I'm being honest, I don't like the crust. I usually have it cut off my sandwiches, so I feel really bad about Jesus being the crust."

We are in the midst of a series we are calling Questions Jesus Asked, looking at some of the 370 questions Jesus asks in the Gospels and people's responses to those questions. This week's question is one that people have answered in so many different ways throughout history.

Jesus has fed large crowds, he has healed a blind man, and his disciples still are struggling to understand what is going on here. As we have said, in Mark, Jesus does stuff. He has been healing people, feeding people, performing miracles while outsiders recognize who he is and what is happening and his closest followers still trying to figure out what is going on. But it is in these next verses where things begin to change.

"Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?"²⁸ And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."²⁹ He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah."³⁰ And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him." Mark 8:27-30 (NRSV)

There are two questions in this text: Who do people say that I am? And who do you say that I am?

A lot is going around about who Jesus is and what he has come to do. Before we are too hard on our ancestors in the faith, we still answer that question in a lot of ways today, and even when we are like Peter, and proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus is the Christ, we don't fully appreciate what that means.

A few years ago one only had to glance at bookshelves or best sellers at online book retailers to see what I mean... titles such as Jesus as CEO, Jesus the Entrepreneur, Jesus in Blue Jeans, Jesus as a Parent, Jesus as Football Coach are just a few.

Some groups and movements have used Jesus to affirm their ideologies, some strange and many the complete opposite of the Gospel. People have used Jesus as a means to oppress, shame, discriminate, perpetuate racism, to keep unjust systems afloat. Brian McLaren offers this critique of how some treat Jesus.

"The more one respects Jesus, the one must be brokenhearted, embarrassed, furious, or some combination thereof when one considers what we Christians have done with Jesus. That's certainly true when it comes to calling Jesus Lord, something we Christians do a lot, often without the foggiest idea of what we mean. Has Jesus become less our Lord and more our mascot?" Brian McLaren

Jesus' question is just as relevant today as when he first asked it, "who do people say that I am?" It's an important question, because the fate of God's dreams for our world, the reign of God, the kingdom of God depends on how we answer that question.

It's no coincidence that Jesus has waited until this moment to ask this question. They are on the way to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. This area had been annexed to the kingdom of Herod the Great, and Herod's kingdom was the opposite of God's kingdom. It was later named Caesarea Philippi in honor of the Roman Emperor Augustus, around 15 years before Jesus enters

the village. The image of Augustus was placed on coins to further cement who was in charge. And of course, many believed that that the Roman Emperor was God, and the Roman Empire was the ultimate authority.

As Jesus enters into this space, he asks, "Who Do People Say That I Am?" and then after a scattering of answers, he asks Who Do You Say That I Am?

We would typically be having our Pastors Class for 5th graders who are preparing to make their Professions of Faith. We are still waiting to baptize our 13 now 6th graders who completed last year's Pastors class and whose professions of faith we witnessed in December. This year's students will have their class in the Fall. One of the things our 5th graders do in preparation for baptism is they right their credo, their statement of what they believe about who Jesus is. They answer the question, Who Do You Say That I Am?

Fredrick Buechner suggests that the 40 days Jesus spends in the wilderness after his baptism, "He is asking himself the question of what it means to be Jesus. And that during these 40 days of Lent we should be asking ourselves what it means to be Christians." Fredrick Buechner

In his Gospel, Mark is seeking to answer these questions and makes the connection between what it means for Jesus to be the Christ and for one to be a follower of Jesus as the Christ.

After Peter makes his confession that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus is Messiah, Jesus teaches the disciples and us today what this means.

"Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things. "He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."
Mark 8:31-34. NRSV

Peter confesses Jesus as Messiah and Christ and then takes issue with what this means. Peter is blinded by his preconceptions.

We who confess Jesus as Christ, we too are blinded by our preconceptions for which this means. We are blinded by our prejudices and preconceptions about what Jesus as Messiah means. We lose sight of things that matter

because we are too invested in things that don't make any real difference at all. We are too invested in things that don't bring us or others life at all.

We claim to know what must be done, even when Jesus tells us differently. We set our mind on human things, as Jesus says, not on divine things. There are no shortcuts. We cannot save ourselves. You cannot be your own savior.

You see, Jesus is teaching us something different. The Roman empire put up crosses everywhere, used them as billboards to remind people that Emperor Ceasar was in charge and that the fate of anyone who challenged this authority was death. Jesus' followers knew what it meant to take up their crosses and follow him.

To take up one's cross is to do what Jesus is doing. Jesus knows that any empire of this world does not have the final word. God's kingdom, God's way has the final word.

Who Do People Say That I Am?

May our answer point lead us to embrace who Jesus is and what he has come to do, the one who gives his life for us and the world.

May our answer lead us to see the opportunities before you to give your life sacrificially to acts of love, compassion, peace, and justice.

This is the way of Jesus. This is the way of God.

Let Us Pray Together: