

**Text: Matthew 16:13-20**

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” <sup>14</sup> They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” <sup>15</sup> “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” <sup>17</sup> Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” <sup>20</sup> Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ. (NIV84)

**Prayer of the Day:**

Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase in faith, hope, and love: and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Sermon Text:**

Last week we had the opportunity to begin our series on the church, but not the church I want, rather the church God wants. Turns out that the church God wants is inclusive. He died for all and wants all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. However, this does not mean that everyone is saved. For as inclusive as the church of God is, it is also very exclusive also but not in the bouncer standing outside the door and only letting a certain kind of person in, no. The exclusivity of the church has everything to do with the word “truth” and only one truth saves. So the church God wants ... well, it has to be a church founded on Christ!

That’s really what Jesus is after in our lesson. That’s why He asks the question, “*Who do people say the Son of Man is?*” In other words, “Who do people say I am?” That’s kind of a dangerous question, right? I mean what if people don’t like you? What if the answers that come back are insulting? Oh but thank God that didn’t happen here right? I mean people had a relatively high view of Jesus. John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, and the prophets are not exactly bad company, right?

Uh Oh! Perhaps something has already been betrayed. They are not bad company for you or for me. These were pillars of the Old and New Testaments. They were and are heroes of faith and as sinful human beings, we could fair far worse than to be counted among them. But then Jesus is no ordinary sinful human being is He?

This is so often the problem with the thinking of the world around us. Very rarely will you run into someone who is going to speak poorly of Jesus. Most will praise Him as a remarkable teacher. Many will say He changed the world in regard to religious views and social norms. Some will even declare Him a prophet, a miracle worker, a mouthpiece of God. But very few will make Him out to be the one true God, the God of truth, the absolute fulfillment of the Old and New Testaments, the Word made flesh for them. It’s not that the answers are utter filth and without truth in them. Many things said are true. They just don’t go far enough.

As Jesus redirects to the disciples that’s what makes Peter’s confession worthy of comment. “*But what about you?*” he asked. “*Who do you say I am?*” <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” Peter hits it square on the head. Jesus is more than all of those

mentioned because He is what all of them pointed to. Jesus is God, though born in time to Mary. He is both 100% God while at the same time 100% Man. He is the fulfillment of every Old Testament Prophecy as He comes to crush the serpent underfoot.

So Jesus says, *“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.”*<sup>18</sup> *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”*

Here is the rock! Not Peter as some falsely claim but Christ and everything He has done for us. Yes, in Christ we also have the Old Testament prophecy fulfilled. The Cross which loomed large even for Isaiah in chapter 53. Deaths defeat Psalm 23 in the resurrection of our Savior from its icy fingers. The righteousness credited to Abraham and the patriarchs all of it credited to us in forgiveness, life, salvation won by this God-Man for us.

That knowledge will change those who belong to Jesus' Church, those who belong to the one true church. So Jesus continues, *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*

As people who see clearly, who have been gifted by God with this faith which sees more than simply a man, we will seek to help those who still wander about in the confusion of the world around them. We shine the bright light of God's Word into their lives exposing sin as the danger that it is and holding out the forgiveness that isn't only ours but which was won for every sinner in the suffering and death of Jesus.

Yes, that will mean announcing that when people are following things other than Christ that they are chasing after no hope at all, in the hope that we will be able to point them to the one thing needful. We'll do it as the Church. As people who realize that there but by the grace of God we would be as well, but eternally grateful that in Christ's blood and righteousness we stand in the firm hope of heaven. We'll be exclusive about the truth and only way to salvation. But, we'll want others to stand with us, so we, like Peter, will confess Christ, in a world which is hopelessly confused about who He is. We'll be inclusive as we seek to hold Christ out to others regardless of race, place, or disgrace that they may know the Christ as we know Him, that they may know his salvation.

Who do you say the Son of Man is? That's is a pointed question that shows where our faith truly sits. Is He really the promised Messiah, long foretold in Scripture who came to save? Is He really God in flesh for the salvation of all? Are we among those who really need Him, not just so that life can be easier here, but so that we might have life in the world to come? And where do we find out about Him? My own feelings and emotions? My own opinions of what is right and what is wrong? My own success or failure? Or is He clearly revealed to us in the pages of Scripture promised for centuries and given in a manger in Bethlehem that He might be better than me, better for me as supplies the righteousness a sinner like me needs, as He dies the death I deserve, to rise that I might live with Him forever? And if He is, shouldn't I tell others, warn others, calling sin what it is, destructive delusions of the Devil that we might point the only answer that means heaven for all even as it means heaven for me? Yes, Yes, a thousand times yes!

So as our series continues, as we contemplate churches, it's all about truth. Truth has nothing to do with what I think and everything to do with what God says and He wants a Church that knows Him. A Church that really knows Jesus. So dear friends who is He? *Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God! Amen!*