

Sermon Notes, January 17, 2016

It All Comes Down to This, Luke 9:18-27

Our text today is of ultimate importance. It was in fact pivotal in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. I chose this text for today because ours is a day and age when we are asking important questions—economically, socially, spiritually, biblically and politically. In fact, in our culture we see not only these questions being asked on a regular basis, but we see people vying to be the *king of the hill* everywhere in our culture and even in the church.

So this morning I'd like for us to focus our attention on this most important question. It is in fact much more significant than all the rest because this question has eternal implications and everything in life all comes down to this.

Jesus asks a question of His disciples in secret. The question seems rather simple.

"WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?"

And Peter, speaking for all the disciples gives the correct answer—THE CHRIST OF GOD

'Christ' in Greek literally meaning the "Messiah", the One we've been waiting for.

YOU ARE GOD COME IN THE FLESH.

But as we'll see, the disciples, I think, and Peter especially, would be very sorry that they gave the correct answer. Because what Jesus says immediately following that correct answer is some of the hardest, most difficult teaching for them and for you and me. It's hard to hear. It's even harder to live. But it is the heart and soul of what it means to be a Christian; what it means to be called a disciple of Jesus Christ.

When you read this text and you look at some of the parallel texts in Mark, the 8th chapter, or in Matthew, the 16th chapter, what you really discover is the disciples, (Peter speaking for the disciples), had the *right answer but all the wrong reasoning*.

This morning (though we'll just be scratching the surface, and this text needs to be heard in light of the issue of discipleship and the cost of discipleship and our deep biblical commitment to Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, and the Head of the Church), yet this morning I want us to think about what it means to have the right answer...but be all wrong.

There's 4 ways that I'd like to look this morning at how that can happen. And it can happen to church-going people who name the name of Jesus Christ or like the disciples who follow after Him.

1. FIRST, you see, it's possible to have the right answer but to have gotten that answer from someone else or to have heard it somewhere and to say the words, but we're not quite sure really what it means.

I'm a little hesitant to ask this. But I will. What does it mean to you to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord? Does it impact your life? Or does it fit with a profession of faith that you grew up with in the church?

You know, we do this thing in the Church of Jesus Christ, when it comes to our understanding of Jesus Christ. We learn to talk the talk before we really know how to walk the walk.

"Who do you say that I am?" "Well, Jesus, you are the Son of God. You're the Savior. You're the Lord. And we celebrate Christmas because you were born..."

All too often, many people, even in the church, will give the right answer when asked or confess something when they're not really sure what they believe or really understand. You see, we forget that the real problem with going through the motions of profession and ritual—is that it ultimately doesn't mean anything. And Jesus says, "Who do you say that I am?"

And while we rattle on He looks straight into our hearts, looking right past our words and He says:

"You know something, you got the answer right. You heard it someplace else, You're saying it as ritual, and as I look at your heart, it isn't really true. Now, who do YOU say that I am?"

What is it that is your personal experience and can you confirm that so that you really know that you know who I am? If you could strip it of all the lingo that you have heard around the church, if you could say just exactly what you know based on what you've experienced...

2. SECONDLY, and this builds on the first, sometimes it's possible to give the right answer and to have no understanding of what we've said.

"Who do YOU say?" The 'you' is emphatic in the Greek. He's asking a personal question. *"Who do YOU say that I am, not you as a group, but who do YOU say that I am, YOU as an individual?"*

Look. Peter says, *"Wait a second. I finally get the right answer and you say, 'Don't tell anybody.'"*

The reason was because Jesus understood that Peter had the right answer for all the wrong reasons. He had the right answer but he very little understanding of what he was saying. That's why Jesus says, *"Don't tell anybody."* You see, what Peter meant by Christ, the Messiah, and what Jesus meant were worlds apart.

What Peter said, and I don't for a minute want to minimize it, was a phenomenal statement. Jesus said to him in Matthew that it could not have come by any tradition, by any heritage, by any popular survey. It was something that was revealed by the Spirit of the Living God. That's the only way. It was a true statement revealed by the Spirit. But Peter had the right answer, but he had no understanding of what it meant to be Christ, the Messiah, the One who had come to suffer and die. Jesus says,

"Don't tell anyone. Please don't tell anyone. For the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests."

We're told in Mark that Peter, (probably again speaking for the disciples), after Jesus is done with His lecture, takes Jesus aside

and rebukes Jesus. And it tells us in Mark 8:33 Jesus turned, after hearing the rebuke, and He looked at His disciples and He rebuked Peter and He said,

"Get thee behind me Satan. You do not have in mind the things of God, but of man."

Right answer. No understanding.

3. THIRD, sometimes it's also possible to have the right answer and to mean exactly the opposite of what we're saying...or to have a wrong application of that answer.

That's also the second part of this 'no understanding' because that's precisely what Peter does. When Peter takes Jesus aside is he's trying to take that answer and he's trying to make Jesus fit into that mold. We do that. Sometimes we have the right answer but then we try to make Jesus fit into our mold. Squeeze Him into something that satisfies us. We're like Peter, *"Come on Jesus, let's stop talking about these hard things...this dying and suffering."*

In verse 22 of this chapter, Jesus says 4 things that are absolutely incongruous, absolutely the opposite of what any Jew would have expected of the Messiah in that day.

1) The first thing that Jesus says is that the Son of Man, (meaning Himself), must suffer many things.

We don't really want to suffer. We want to alleviate as much suffering in our world, and certainly in our culture as we possibly can. We want nothing to do with suffering and we certainly don't want to look to a Messiah or a Savior who was going to talk about suffering. As long as we can eliminate any talk about suffering or anything that requires commitment or the cost of commitment, you go ahead and do it!

2) And secondly, then He says, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected."

What's the #1 problem that not only teenagers have but many of us have as well? Peer pressure. It's the desire to be accepted. It's what we struggle with the most.

3) Thirdly, "The Son of Man must suffer...and be rejected and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and teachers."

Jesus says, *"You're not going to get that approval if you follow Me and you're certainly not going to get it, if you're looking to the 'status quo'."*

4) And fourth. "He must suffer many things, be rejected; be rejected by the chief priests, elders, and teachers and He must be killed and on the third day rise."

Well, that was the straw that broke the camel's back. You talk about suffering, it's even worse that you talk about being rejected, but then you talk about dying. Words they didn't want to hear. I'm sure that Peter was sorry he gave the right answer because his dreams just got stomped on. He tried to take Jesus and he tried to fit Him into his expectations. And Jesus in the end rebuked him.

It's possible to have the right answer and have no understanding of what you're saying.

4. FINALLY, it's possible to have the right answer but not believe. Not really believe it.

The proof of that is in the pudding. It's in the obedience. Sometimes it's possible to have the right answer and be so complacent as to do nothing with what we know. Jesus isn't asking intellectual questions here. It's not a matter so much of the mind as it is of the will. It's not a question of the head but of the heart.

The disciples would soon understand what Jesus already knew and what we must understand. And that is with this confession of Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Christ of God; with this confession there is a call to commitment and those who answer that confession correctly with their lips are bound to answer this question later: *"What have you done with what you know?"*

You may be thinking, *"You know, I'm sitting here in class, and I've never gotten such a tongue lashing for knowing the right answer."* I suppose that's how Peter felt. He had the right answer, but then Jesus goes on with some very hard teaching about what it really means to be a disciple. You and I had better ask ourselves whether or not we not only have the right answer but the right application. And we believe what we've just said.

You know what, I'd love to give you the answer. I'd love to have you say with me; now repeat after me, so that when you're quizzed you can tell them this answer. I can't do that. This is not a test by rote. It isn't a test that you can memorize just the right answers for. It only comes by Jesus asking you the question, INDIVIDUALLY, EMPHATICALLY. **"WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?" CAN YOU ANSWER IT?** You can only answer that if you have a personal relationship with the Living God through Jesus Christ that is day in and day out.

To make this text and this message very personal this morning, every one of you should now ask,

- "Has God done this for me?"
- "How did He do it?"
- "What was it like in my experience when God revealed to me that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God?"
- "What difference has it made in my life that God the Father has revealed to me the true glory of His Son, Jesus Christ?"

You may think,

- "Well, that's nice, but I think I already know the answer and I'm not so sure it makes as big a difference as you say."

It does make a difference, believe me.

- It matters on the day of the resurrection of the saints when we'll be gathered into His presence.
- It matters because of this: Your answer to who He is determines and defines who and what you are and whose you are!