**Who Do You Say I Am?**

**(Who is Jesus to you?)**

July 5, 2020

Mark 8:22-30

Key Verse 8:29 “‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah.’”

In every human relationship, there comes a time when it gets personal. That is, there comes a time when you have to figure out for yourself just who the other person is to you and what he or she means to you. The question might be asked by your best friend: “So, is she your girlfriend or what?” At some point, relationships get personal. That’s the watershed question in any human relationship. The question forces us to either move forward in the relationship or move away. It forces us to search our heart, mind, and soul and decide who you say the other person is. A mere acquaintance? Just a friend? A best friend? A potential life partner? Who do you say that other person is? When I was studying the Bible with a student, he got a phone call. He said, “I am with some friend.” He did not say, “I am studying the Bible with my Bible teacher.” I was disappointed. There comes a time in every churchgoers’ life when you have to answer the same

question about Jesus. Who do you say that he is? Is he just another great man in history? In that case, Jesus would be just another acquaintance. In this passage, Jesus himself forces the issue on his disciples. “Who do you say I am?” “Who am I to you?” That is the most important question that you will ever answer. That is the most important question that any human being will ever answer: who is Jesus Christ? Everybody on this planet is accountable to God eternally for the answer to that question. Wrong answer means hell. Right answer means heaven.

I.Jesus heals a blind man (22-26)

Look at verses 22-23. “They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, ‘Do you see anything?’” This miracle of the healing the blind man is unique in Mark’s gospel. Jesus did not want to turn this healing into a public display that would stir up miracle seekers and embarrass the man. So Jesus personally escorted him to a quiet place. Once there, Jesus spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him. Then Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?” Jesus had a personal conversation with the man. Jesus built up a relationship of trust and love step by step. To answer Jesus’ question, this man had to look up. He seems to have had a habit of looking down all the time; perhaps he felt fatalistic about his blindness and ashamed. But after hearing Jesus’ question, he looked up. Then he said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.” His sight was partially restored, but his vision was hazy and blurry.

At this point, the disciples might have identified with this man. They, too, felt a kind of blindness. They had seen many things that Jesus had done, but they always forgot about it right away. Then they reverted back to their habit of living by natural feelings and thoughts. In the last week’s passage, this caused them to misunderstand Jesus–that he was talking about bread–when in fact, he was talking about the bad influence of the Pharisees. At that time, Jesus rebuked them severely, saying, “Do you have eyes but fail to see?” They must have been very sorry. They must have cried many tears in secret, feeling hopeless and helpless. As they watched the blind man, they could relate to him. Look at verse 25. “Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.” All the man needed was another touch of Jesus. Then his eyesight was completely restored. Likewise, all the disciples needed was a touch of Jesus to their eyes. Jesus can heal our spiritual blindness. Then we can see Jesus, others, and ourselves clearly with 20/20 vision.

II. Peter’s confession (27-30)

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. This was a Gentile territory. Jesus was deliberately separating himself from the crowds to have quiet time with his disciples. He wanted to ask them something very important. Jesus has lived with his disciples for three years and showed himself to be the Son of God. Jesus knew that his death on the cross was near. Jesus never mentioned his suffering and death on the cross and resurrection. The disciples needed to have a deep, personal conviction of who Jesus really is before Jesus could share with them his suffering and death on the cross and invite them to follow him in a life of mission. If Jesus had revealed his death and resurrection earlier, his disciples might not have been mature enough to understand. Now Jesus felt that his disciples were ready and asked questions.

Look at verse 27b. “On the way he asked them, ‘Who do people say I am?’” This was a pretty easy question to answer; it was a request for objective information. Today they could look up Jesus’ name in Wikipedia and summarize what people say in five minutes. Look at verse 28. “They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.’” John the Baptist, Elijah and the prophets were all recognized as men sent by God with God’s message. People of Jesus’ day believed that Jesus came from God and served God’s purpose. They did not listen to the slander of the religious leaders, who wanted to misrepresent Jesus as demon-possessed. They knew that Jesus came from God. Even today most people believe that Jesus came from God and did noble work. Jesus is generally respected by the world’s religions. Both Hindus and Buddhists include Jesus among their gods. Muslims accept Jesus as one of the prophets of God. The general consensus of mankind has been to respect Jesus as a great teacher, a noble humanitarian, the first social justice warrior, and a man from God. But to Jesus this was not enough.

Look at verse 29a. “‘But what about you?’ he asked, ‘Who do you say I am?’” Jesus wanted a different answer from his disciples. They had lived with Jesus. They had seen Jesus calm the storm at sea. They had seen Jesus raise Jairus’ daughter to life. What did they say about Jesus? Look at verse 29b. “Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah.’” This was precisely the answer Jesus wanted to hear. Peter’s confession here of Jesus as the Messiah stands as the climax of the first 8 chapters of the book of Mark. The question of who Jesus is has dominated the book of Mark from the very first chapter. In the first verse, Mark told us that he was writing an account of the origin of the message of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God (1:1). As the storyteller, Mark knows exactly who Jesus is, but the people he describes meeting Jesus seem totally in the dark about who Jesus is until now. In the second chapter, the religious leaders were offended when Jesus forgave a man’s sins; they said, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” In the fourth chapter, when Jesus calmed a storm, his disciples ask, “Who is this that even the winds and the waves obey him?” (4:41). In his home town of Nazareth in chapter 6 the people asked, “Where did Jesus get this ability?” (6:2). Everyone is trying to figure out who Jesus is. And the irony is that while none of the people understood who Jesus is before Peter’s confession here, the demons have known throughout the story perfectly well who Jesus is. In chapter 1 a demon cries out, “I know who you are, the Holy One of God” (1:24). In chapter 3 we learned that whenever Jesus came in contact with demons they cried out, “You are the Son of God” (3:11). In chapter 5, the man with a legion of demons calls Jesus “the Son of the Most High God” (5:7). Let’s think about what this confession means in three ways.

**First**, the meaning of “the Messiah” in Biblical context. Peter’s answer, “You are the Messiah,” had a very specific meaning in light of God’s promises and prophecies in the Bible. “The Messiah” in Hebrew, and the Christ in Greek literally means “the anointed one.” Specifically, this refers to David’s son who was promised to come and reign on his throne forever (2Sa 7:16; Lk 1:33). Psalm 2 tells us about “the Anointed One.” He is anointed with God’s almighty power to rule as God’s King. His task is to subdue the rebellious nations and to rule over them with an iron scepter. This means he will restore God’s reign on earth as it is in heaven. He brings an end to crime, war, injustice and all wrongdoing. He will restore order, righteousness and peace on the earth. We are very sorry to see many dictators ruling with violence in North Korea, and other parts of the world. Many people, especially Christians, suffer much under cruel dictators. However, when the Messiah reigns on earth, the Messiah will put an end to all dictatorship, violence and injustice. The Messiah will establish justice, peace and righteousness throughout the world.

In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus quoted the prophecy of Isaiah in 61:1-2 to declare that he is the anointed one. Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel powerfully. Jesus fulfilled the will of God by dying for our sins and rising from the dead. Whoever believes in Jesus is freed from the power of sin and receives eternal life in the kingdom of God. This is not just a theoretical hope. While we live in this world, Jesus sets us free from the curse and restores God’s favor on our lives. We love to have a king like Jesus. We are willing to be ruled by such a wonderful king. We are willing to serve him wholeheartedly and joyfully all our days. The Messiah is the key figure in history. He is not just a great teacher of mankind. He is the King anointed by God to rule forever with righteousness, peace and love. He is the hope of Israel and the hope of the nations.

**Second**, the meaning of “you are the Messiah” to Peter. Look at verse 29 again. “‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah’” Jesus was not really looking for a theological answer from Peter. Jesus wanted a personal confession. Jesus wanted a confession of faith and love. When Peter said, “You are the Messiah,” he was proclaiming Jesus as his Savior and King. Peter was pledging himself to Jesus as a loyal subject who would love Jesus, serve Jesus, and follow Jesus wherever he would lead.

How did Peter come to make this confession? First of all, Peter had experienced Jesus’ divinity in his life together with Jesus. When Jesus called Peter, Peter obeyed and followed him. Then Peter experienced amazing power and blessings from God. He saw Jesus drive out evil spirits from people. He saw Jesus heal all the sicknesses in his hometown in one night. He saw Jesus walk on water in the midst of a storm. Still, Peter’s personal experience was not enough to enable him to make this confession. It was the work of the Holy Spirit in Peter. Natural man does not understand the things of God; The Holy Spirit gave Peter the absolute assurance that Jesus is the Messiah. That is why Jesus said, “For this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.” (Mt 16:17)

**Third**, “but what about you?” the meaning of this confession to us. The “you” in Jesus’ question applies to all of us. Jesus asks, “But what about you? Who do you say I am?” We must answer this question personally. We cannot answer as members of a Christian family, “Well, my dad says Jesus is the Messiah.” We cannot answer as members of a church, “Well, UBF believes that Jesus is the Messiah.” We must answer Jesus’ question personally by the help of the Holy Spirit. We must answer Jesus on the basis of his work in our lives. We must answer Jesus with faith in our hearts. Romans 10:9-10 says, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” When we confess that Jesus is the Messiah we are justified. It means that even though we are unforgivable sinners, God justifies us as his precious children through Jesus Christ. At the same time, he takes away the guilty consciences from our hearts. When we confess that Jesus is the Christ, God takes away all our burden of sin, the torment of the devil. In addition, God gives us eternal life together with the joy of life.

Who is Jesus to you? When Peter said, “You are the Messiah,” it meant, “You are my God and my King, to whom I give my love, loyalty, faithfulness and obedience.” Intellectually Peter has known this. But the Holy Spirit gave him a profound, personal conviction. After this, his relationship with Jesus would never be the same. Jesus was no more casual acquaintance. Peter could never be satisfied with a self-centered existence. If Jesus is the Messiah, he would have to surrender his life to King Jesus. We also must learn of Jesus until we can see in him God Almighty and the Savior of the world, and make a confession of faith, and surrender our life to him.

In this passage Jesus asks each of us, “But what about you? Who do you say I am?” Let’s prayerfully answer this personal question because Jesus wants to take our relationship in a new level.

Big Idea: We have to answer the question, “Who is Jesus to you?”