

WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT I AM?

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Matthew 16:13-23

This is a momentous moment when the Lord ambushes the disciples with a question. It can be easy to drift and travel along without asking important questions. We might be in a state of simply not thinking. Here the Lord puts the disciples on the spot. But the question about the Lord's identity actually puts all mankind on the spot. We all need to answer this question accurately because so much hinges upon us getting the answer right. Who do we say that He is?

1. There are lots of opinions out there.

The disciples, in answer to the Lord's question, faithfully told Him what the people of that day were saying. There were various options that people were choosing. 'John the Baptist', 'Elijah' or 'one of the prophets' were the stock answers people gave to the question. John the Baptist actually testified to the identity of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God, so it is surprising people still got this wrong and thought John was testifying about himself.

Like then, we are surrounded by people with opinions and different options to answer this question. Some would say that He is simply a moral teacher who went round telling people to be nice to each other. Or they might tell us that it is unimportant who He really is. Some people enlist Him to their own cause and say that He would support their point of view. So He is recruited to justify capitalism, communism, gay rights, transgenderism, or religion without any leadership or definite doctrine. They drain Him of His divinity and express the belief that He taught different things to what is recorded in the Bible.

2. There is no more important matter to be clear on.

He is the only Person who can save us from our sin. He is the Son of the living God and comes to us full of mercy and compassion. He is a sufficient Christ to meet all our need. It is so important that we have a relationship with Him. Such a relationship is not ours because we were born in a Christian family, or a so-called Christian nation. It is not a relationship that is earned but is to be received.

Sin separates us far from God and totally removes us from fellowship with Him. Yet the Lord of glory comes to seek and to save us. Yet man, in his rebellion and sin, makes that relationship to consist of something else. We prefer to leave the basis of the relationship unclear and vague. We want to leave the matter of eternity imprecise and undefined and simply 'hope for the best'. We want 'sticking plaster solutions' even though deep down we feel uneasy about where this is all going to end. Really our Lord came to do away with all the uncertainty and remove all our doubts and fears.

The thought of eternity worries us as we fear there is more to life than this but are unwilling to commit to what Scripture reveals to us. Yet there is only one authority who can answer the questions of eternity for us with clarity and truth. He is the Son of God who one day will come back from the dead. He can bring calm to our troubled souls and be a Friend to us who will be our guide beyond death. The future is all in His hands. He has the keys of death and Hades in His hands. He can meet the deepest needs of the soul.

3. There is a confession to make.

Peter could not but confess His name, despite all the things that people around him were saying and believing. There was so much evidence to back up His titles and Peter was able to rely upon his own experience of what he had seen and heard.

We have the Bible which has its unique authority and validates itself with its own logic and consistency. Here God is speaking to us and we are to listen to Him. He speaks to us by His Son and so we must listen to Him and agree with what He says.

We are so weak and foolish, and yet we think we are so wise. We have to admit that we are fighting against God by asserting our own righteousness or our own self-sufficiency. We must repent and concede everything that He says about Himself as being true. We should see the full glory of Christ without reservation or argument. We are to admire the love and care that is seen in Him. We are to be struck by His purity and majesty. We are to marvel that one so wonderful should have been yielded up for us and permitted Himself to experience such harm and danger for our sakes. He was broken for us and so He was able to make good our lawless deeds against God.

We must confess Him and own Him as the Son of the living God, showing our true commitment to Him by being baptized.