

Matthew 16:13-20 August 23, 2020 "You Say It" Pat Weatherwax

Our scripture comes today, from the Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 16, verses 13-20, from the NRSV.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

The gospel of our Lord. Praise to you, O Christ!

(INTRODUCTION)

I've recently realized that we often use incomplete language and implications when we talk about "joining the church". With all new members, whether through confirmation, transfer or re-affirmation, it's about professing faith, that we believe Jesus is Lord.

From our *Book of Order*, the traditional way is that:

"Persons may enter into active church membership through a public profession of faith, made after careful examination by the session in the meaning and responsibilities of membership".

So. It's not really about membership, it's about professing faith, and becoming part of the church, which is the work-wide professing body of believers. We, like Peter, profess faith in Jesus as the Christ, Messiah, Savior, Lord. It's when you say it publicly *and* know what it means, you become an active part of Christ's church.

(TITLES)

In our text Peter, who has always seemed a bit rocky, and hard-headed, makes his profession of faith, saying: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus says "That's how my church will grow".

Jesus calls himself a "Son of Man", but knows his divinity. Peter calls him Messiah but knows his humanity. This isn't easy to understand for any of us. That's why we encourage discipleship opportunities, Confirmation Classes and sermons! It's so we

can “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).”

So many titles! Lord, Savior, Jesus, Christ, plus messiah and son of man, son of God. And no, we won't try to talk about all of them in one sermon. But my point, as it always is, whatever we say about God, whatever title we use, we need to remember there's always more!

Jesus declared that he is no less than God, the great "I Am," and he uses "I Am" statements. Realize what that meant!

In making this claim, Jesus set off a firestorm of debate that began when he claimed equality with God and continues even to this day. Jesus and his disciples clearly maintained that Messiah would be no less a person than God in human flesh. It was these claims that led the ancient rabbis to try Jesus for blasphemy, i.e. claiming equality with God.

The belief that God is a plural being, eternally existent in three persons, God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit, is called the doctrine of the Trinity. This is one of the foundational beliefs of Christianity”

(Blue Letter Bible

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/eastman_mark/messiah/sfm_09.cfm)

(Messiah and LORD defined):

Christians believe that Jesus *was* the Savior who *has* delivered humankind from its sins. In the Hebrew Bible the word is messiah and in the Greek Bible messiah is translated as the Christ, the anointed (set apart) one.

The first and strongest definition of lord is: “one having power and authority over others”. In the dictionary after lord with secular definitions, is noted Lord, capitalized: “Lord- the Supreme Being; God; the Savior, Jesus Christ.” That might lead us to ask

BUT ISN'T GOD OUR FATHER THE LORD? From early on in Genesis we hear the holy title “Lord God”. Like in Exodus:

God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations (Exodus 3:15).

And the great commandment:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:3-5).

So. How's your basic algebra? If A=B, and B=C, then A=C, right? How do we get to Jesus being God? Jesus is the LORD. the LORD is God. So, Jesus is God. Jesus *is* God! It involves taking the whole of scripture, the old and the new testaments and understanding the language trail.

How do we know this? We don't just figure this out in our own wisdom. It's part of the mystery of grace- that God gives us the understanding. In our text from Matthew 16, Jesus explained to Peter this way:

"For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven."
(Matt 16:17).

And, not only that, Holy Spirit also gets involved, directing our understanding:
From 1 Corinthians (12:3b):

"No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit".

God wants to be known, and works to make God's whole self known to us

What do we know, with God's help? We know that Jesus is our Messiah, Lord and God. "Jesus is Lord " may be the earliest recorded Christian profession of faith, and it's found in Philippians 2 (:9-11)

Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

And the end of John's gospel we hear why the gospels were written, (John 20:31):

But these are written so that you may come to believe (or as other ancient authorities read *may continue to believe*) that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

What else helps us believe?

We can follow the progression of faith of Peter. Peter, called by Jesus, away from his fishing for fish, to fishing for people. Peter from today's gospel lesson, (Matthew 16:16) who said: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God", and the same Peter later in from Matthew (26:69-75) who swore 3 times about the arrested Jesus: "I don't know him!"

That same disciple Simon Peter, nicknamed " Rock", soon after Christ's resurrection, according to the Book of Acts, preached:

'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of

those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power (Acts 2:21-24).

And then verse 36,

“Therefore let the entire house of Israel (that is, God’s people) know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Peter, the denier, becomes the preacher, the rock that God uses to bring people to faith in Christ. Wow, Something extraordinary must have happen. What was that? The resurrection. Peter witnessed the resurrection and believed.

But what does it mean for us, that Jesus is Lord? Scripture gives us some more answers, like in Proverbs 3 (:5-6 NKJV):

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

And in 1 John 4 (:14-16):

And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

The more you trust, the more you will know God’s love and direction.

(CONCLUSION)

The late Dr. George Brown, my seminary Christian Ed professor, told the story of 2 young brothers entering a Central Grand Rapids church. It was a Sunday morning when he was an associate pastor, and the two pastors were robed and ready to process in. The little guys looked up at the garbed pastors near the door. The senior pastor opened the door for them and jokingly asked: “What’s the password”.

The older of the two boys thought only for a moment, and then repeated something he had heard his pastors say many times: “Jesus is Lord!”

Jesus is Lord: the “one having power and authority over us”.

Can you say it? Is Jesus Lord? It’s so much easier to say it than to live it. We so easily avoid authority. We want to be in control, we want autonomy. So, then, what do we do? We say it and keep saying it, because it’s got to be remembered and lived every moment of every day.

Jesus is LORD.
Thanks be to God!