

WELCOME 27th March 2022 – 4 Lent '22 C

Luke 9:18-27

Welcome! It's great to be together again...*Bible Study Qs* are provided to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word & work in your life, then you can share that w/ someone else. We'll also use these for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-up on Friday**. While the restrictions are lifting...We're still doing things we need to maintain a level of safety: Hand sanitizer. Masks optional but for some a good choice. Thanks set-up & clean-up folks!

As we move into this week... "Show me your work." Said every math teacher everywhere. We know...Getting a right answer is only part of the story. How you reach & then apply the answer is crucial. Do you "get" the process? Can you see your mistakes? Are you building on what you already know?

If you hang around church long enough you start to assume the answer to any faith question is Jesus. If you guess Jesus, you can't go wrong...right? But today Jesus asks "*Who do you say that I am?*" & he's not interested in tentative hopeful guesses at an answer, or the shoot-from-the-hip answer we think he wants to hear. Jesus invites us to show him how our answer works itself out in the context of our lives - in our relationships, in our work, in our finances, in our attitudes & values, our worship & our calendar...in everything...every day.

It's a personal question that requires much of us. But this invitation to surrender everything to living with Jesus will change our lives. When you say "yes" to this invitation...He will redeem the past, provide confidence in the present and guarantee a bold certainty of the finished outcome of our lives.

We'll explore that today because the most important question you'll ever answer is "*Who do you say that I am?*"

Let's pray & then we'll see...

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Jesus said: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Lord, know us inside & out...and you call us to follow anyway. You are wisdom yet you abide with our folly. Take hold of our hearts & lives in this day & lead us to follow you in every thought, word, and deed. Give us hearts of obedience and trust such that we pursue your good and perfect in all things at any cost...in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

Let's sing then we'll hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. In what area of your life does following Jesus most challenge you?
2. When is it most difficult for you to talk about your relationship with Jesus?

4 LENT '22 C – RSVP: INVITATION TO SURRENDER

≈ 15 years ago... **Judah** Smith became the lead pastor @ CityChurch in Seattle WA. NW corner US...As the new pastor he wanted to start a larger conversation in & around CC & greater Seattle about Jesus. It wasn't promoting CC as such but trying to get people thinking about Jesus. Yes it was marketing but good mktg. So they rented bus signs, billboards, created FB ads/website w/ 2 words & a line: **Jesus is ____**. It just *invites* a response...what they hoped...fill in the blank. I kinda like that...If he'd have asked a grey-haired long-in-the-tooth pastor we'd have told him his website/FB page would crash from the # of responses he was gonna get. In about a year they had over 1 ½ million hits & > than 75K distinct different responses...He uses the word "overwhelmed."

Not me...not the least...**Every**body has an opinion about Jesus. **One** day Jesus left the crowds to pray alone. Only his disciples were with him, & he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, & others say you are one of the other ancient prophets risen from the dead."

There it is. Everybody has an opinion about Jesus. When he was right in front of 'em opinions were like fleas on a dog...they couldn't agree who he was.... & that doesn't include things religious folks said: demon-possessed, blasphemer, drunkard, glutton.

Today/week...Ask someone out there...someone who has no link to the church or someone you know who has been part of a church for years...**How** do you finish the sentence: 'Jesus is ____' How do you fill in that blank?"

The good news - interesting news is...right now lots of Australians are ready to talk about that. Google search trends & homegrown Oz research tell us Australians are on-line/open to discussion searching for answers to the tough questions of life... hope & direction – assurance & strength in a world where the "new normal" is vastly different more challenging than any of us have ever seen. Many (maybe you?) are wary uneasy unsure of the trajectory life is taking. Oddly enough; for many Jesus is an open question...less hesitant/resistant than we might think...Which is why he confronts the 12 personally: **But** who do you say I am?" *With Jesus it's always personal.*

It's not enough to regurgitate popular opinion...It's not enough to simply repeat what you've been told by your mum or the priest or Sunday School teacher or what you read on your grannies cross-stitched wall-hanging. Jesus is **ALWAYS** a personal encounter...not by rote - ritual - family religion...*With Jesus it's always personal.* Watch how this unfolds...As Lk recounts the gospel narrative here...Jesus has just fed the 5000 & pulled back a bit to be by himself to pray. Only the 12 appear to be nearby. So he speaks in the context of multitudes of mistaken wrong beliefs about

his identity, purpose, mission...Peter's confession takes places surrounded by those who had no idea or were at best confused & just plain wrong about Jesus. See it? Surrounded **by** mistaken belief the disciples are called to declare the truth. In the midst of a world that gets the crucial question wrong, followers of Jesus are called to confess true faith.

But who do you say I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah sent from God!" Jesus warned his disciples not to tell anyone who he was. Everyone in this room just breathed a sigh of relief...Whew! I don't have to tell anyone about Jesus. He said so himself! No! That's *NOT* what he said...Look...1st...What did Peter say? *Messiah sent from God.* Peter by the work of the Spirit in him gets it that Jesus is the One God has sent to restore all creation to the Father's intent...to usher in the fulfilment of all God's promises... to re-establish our hearts in obedience/responsiveness to the Father's will/purpose for all things...that the promised rest/shalom Israel was supposed to enjoy & experience in the Promised Land but was lost by their rebellion & idolatry is now offered in Jesus. In Jesus all things are going to be made right & new & complete & Peter says so! Surrounded by *mistaken* belief disciples are called to declare the truth.

So why "don't tell anyone"? Because of what comes next: **The** Son of Man must suffer many terrible things...He will be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, & the teachers of religious law. He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead." We've noted ^{b/4} that the heartfelt expectation in Israel after the Exile was that the Messiah would be a conquering hero-king who would vanquish their captors/conquerors drive out the occupying armies of Rome & rebuild David's dynasty from Euphrates River to Mediterranean Sea. They longed for a warrior in the mould of David or Conan the Barbarian. Crush your enemies see them driven ^{b/4} you & hear the lamentations of their women. That was their image of "Messiah/Christ."

But Jesus' reign; his glory; his Kingdom would come only through his work as the Suffering Servant who would absorb the world's sin evil & death into his own death & by rising from the grave to rule over all things in abundant eternal life/love/joy, hand that victory rescue restoration & re-creation & reconciliation w/ the Father to all who trusted in him...all who had faith/believed in/received his abundant life as a gift. Until that suffering, death, resurrection, & rule are accomplished...any profession of Jesus as Messiah would surely be misunderstood...as it was. NT shows there were those who wanted Jesus to be that warrior-Conan-king. *Don't tell anyone* until my life/death/rez demonstrates the truth of the gospel...validates all I say & do. "You are the Messiah sent from God!" right but hold that until I show everyone what that means. But it doesn't end there because why...**With** Jesus it's **always** personal.

Remember... **personal** DOES NOT mean private. **Then** he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must deny yourself, take up your cross daily, & follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? If anyone is ashamed of me & my message, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in his glory & in the glory of the Father & the holy angels."

Far too many self-declared-Xns are convinced their faith in Jesus is simply to secure their afterlife...getting into heaven when they die...that reconciliation w/ the Father & forgiveness of sin are solely about what happens when all the breath leaks out of us & we achieve room temperature....Nothing could be further from the truth. Nary a word Jesus speaks here is about the afterlife...Every word is about all of life. Every word is a call to allow the life of Jesus to be seen at work in you "daily." I started today w/a pastor from Seattle...let me throw in an old German for good measure:

In 1849, Celle, Nth **Germany**, Louis Harms founded the original Hermannsburg Mission Centre. Many of the pastors & lay people trained there arrived here. At the heart of their equipping of followers of Christ was this key element: "It is not enough, just to be religious & good, to live sensibly & act properly, but it is essential to have Jesus Christ at the centre of one's life & testify to that." Pr Harms led from that heartset.

"**You** are the Messiah sent from God!" Messiah/Christ means Anointed One – God's unique restorer reconciler rescuer redeemer. Jesus defines that further by the cross, resurrection & rule as Lord of all...Anointed of God...Anointed for you who then Anoints you for life in his name from here & now on..."It is not enough, just to be religious & good, to live sensibly & act properly, but it is essential to have Jesus Christ at the centre of one's life & testify to that." It is essential to deny yourself take up your cross daily (live the role of servant to the undeserving & unrelated) follow Jesus give up your life for his sake...surrender every day dollar decision...conform to him your lifestyle beliefs attitudes values...how you raise your kids spend your holidays or your retirement...house you buy the car you drive...how you deal with people who are being paid to serve you...calendar & your checkbook...

Jesus issues a 2-edged challenge/invitation...Messiah/Christ/Anointed Rescuer & Redeemer will only make sense by my death & resurrection & reign but no one will believe you believe that until they see it in you...unless & until your life is released surrendered to me the world will continue to guess & guess wrong. If they can't see a difference – if you look just like them act just like them do exactly as they do... *With Jesus it's always personal*...Peter says it, but it isn't until he sees the Spirit completely take over Gentile Cornelius' household that he fully surrenders to Jesus & fully comprehends that Jesus is Lord of All...that God's salvation is for all people

Jews/non-Jews alike - that every soul on this planet is deeply loved & passionately died/risen for by Jesus.

We have a picture in our minds of surrender...a picture of weakness, failure, shame & embarrassment...of loss too great to bear. In Christ, the greatest triumph is found in his surrender to death for us so that as he is "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father we too might walk in newness of life" & by surrendering our lives to his – by yielding our control for obedience to him – by releasing all we are into his hands... Living with Jesus changes our lives. Like Peter, we don't finally get it until we finally do it. When you say "yes" to this invitation He redeems your past by his forgiveness, provides confidence in the present by his presence & power & guarantees a bold certainty of the finished outcome of our lives eternally in love & joy & peace in the Father's house forever.

But if no one ever knows because they don't hear it & see it in you or me...How will they ever know? *How can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? Rom 10:14*

Jesus invites us to show him how our answer works itself out in the context of our lives - in our relationships, in our work, in our finances, in our attitudes & values, our worship & our calendar...in everything...every day.

TAKE IT HOME: PSALM 139:23-24

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you,
(false worship – taken over your role as Lord)
and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*

What part of your life is the Spirit "pointing out" that you need to surrender?

...So that someone can see & hear the crucified/risen/ruling Lord Jesus Christ in you...

Let's pray... Lord, the sacrifice of your Son is the gift that grants life with you forever. You gave up everything for us so we could be yours. Thank you for breaking the chains that kept us in bondage to sin. Thank you for the freedom we now enjoy in you. By your Spirit draw us closer in following you. Take from us the distractions & distortions & in their place lay on us our daily cross. Let life with you be our fervent passion as we live with our families, in our work & study, in our hobbies & finances, in our neighbourhood & this city. Make us a church filled with your love, grace, joy, peace & presence...not for our sake, but for those yet to be called your children... Through Jesus Christ... Amen.