

## You Are the Christ; Mark 8:27-30

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Our text today will be verses 27 through 30. So just as a quick recap, last week We began looking at chapter 8 and we took last Sunday to look at the entirety of chapter 8 We wanted to make this high altitude Passover we wanted to see where Mark was leading us because it was worth our time just to see how he takes the story from halfway through chapter 7 through the end of chapter 8 and Through these several odd occurrences, through these two healings that are done in rather odd manners, through the long journey, the 120 mile plus journey, through the land of the Gentiles, through the, once again, the misunderstanding of the disciples, through the second feeding, which almost seems to be an exact replica of the first feeding, All these things seem a bit odd, but then we tracked through chapter 8 and we saw Mark's purpose here.

We saw that in the first feeding, the second feeding, this is of course a revelation of who Jesus is, but then this revelation must be heard and it must be seen. And so there's the two miracles, the opening of the ears, which Jesus does in an odd sort of manner, sticking the fingers in the man's ears. Uh, the spitting and everything.

And then there's the second healing of the blind man as he heals the blind man. So the, now that these men can hear and they can see the feedings, the two feedings, which are demonstrating Christ Jesus, this is Jesus giving an object lesson, so to speak. But then the second feeding that we come to the feeding, or I'm sorry, not the second feeding, but the second miracle, the blind man.

who is healed. Jesus does this in an extraordinarily different manner. He does this, this is the only miracle that he ever performs in stages. He performs it in the first stage and then the second stage. It's almost like the first Touched by Jesus didn't quite get the man healed. And then the second touch by Jesus is the one that completes the healing.

And then Jesus does something that He never does anywhere else. He asks the person that He's healed if the healing worked. Nowhere else does Jesus ask, Did that work? Are you feeling better? Can you see now? Is the leprosy gone? But here, Jesus does two things that He does nowhere else. He heals in two steps, and He asks the person if this worked or not.

So Jesus is demonstrating this object lesson here, because this is exactly what's happening with the disciples as we speak. They are being led along into a greater understanding. They're being led along into, really, a fundamental understanding of who Christ is at this point. And so, as Jesus asked the blind man, He says, Yes, I can, but only barely.

The people are like trees walking around. He touches them again. Can you see now? Yes, I see everything clearly. In the same way, or in a parallel manner, Jesus is leading the disciples into an understanding of who He is, and this episode is followed immediately by just what we would expect, which is Peter's declaration.

You are the Christ. Then, after this, Jesus then begins to show them, well, you're still seeing me like trees walking, because then there comes this rebuke of Jesus, and it all sort of comes out, we've yet to get here, but yet it all comes out that their understanding of the Christ that they have just

proclaimed is Very faulty and deficient because Jesus then begins to teach them that he must suffer many things.

So that's where we are right now. We have tracked through all of chapter eight. We're going to back up today and we're going to back up just a few verses to verse 27, and we're going to pick up in verse 27. So last week we covered some. 30, 34 verses, which was a record setting pace for us. But now we're going to slow the pace down and we're going to spend a number of Sundays in verses 27 through 34.

Probably, I think, at this point, Three Sundays on these three, uh, on these passages here. So as we begin there this morning, what I want to do is I want to begin by taking about 10 minutes and just giving us an overview of the section that is to come because here at chapter 8, pivotal passage. This is one of the most pivotal passages in all of Mark's gospel.

This is a passage on which the entire story of the gospel will turn. Everything will change at this point. Now we've said all along that a good stopping point in Mark's Gospel would be the end of Chapter 8, which is where we are now. So we've kind of intended, we've been in Mark for about a year now.

This is the 52nd message in Mark's Gospel. And so we're here at this point, which is a natural stopping point for us to pause and then maybe return back to our study in Ephesians, which we left off about a year and a half or two years ago. But saying, having said that, when we'd spend some time in one book, Sometimes, after a while, it can, there can be a fatigue that sets in, sort of a weariness.

And that's oftentimes a good time to sort of put one on pause and look at another one. But you know, I don't feel that. I don't, I don't really feel that you feel that either. I may be wrong, but it sort of feels like to me that we've got a head of steam, that God has given us a head of steam. And we're tracking through Mark, we are just now coming to a very pivotal section and I feel like we should just continue on with Mark, at least for the time being.

And so as we begin this, we're starting a new section that will take us now through the end of chapter 10. And so what I want to do is spend about 10 minutes just to give an overview, a lay of the next section so that we, I always find it helpful to know what's coming. I always find it helpful to know ahead of time where the writer's taking me so that I can be looking for that.

So I just want to take a few minutes to do that right now. Just so that we see what Mark is doing. So this is the pivot point in Mark's gospel. Chapter 8, verse 29, the declaration, you are the Christ. It is the absolute epitome. It is the high point, the high watermark of Mark's gospel. It is literally like the spiritual fulcrum.

You know, the fulcrum where you got this point and you got the seesaw thing. Who remembers back from element? Who's old enough? They're back in elementary school. You had the real cool toys on the playground and you had the seesaw and so if you had the seesaw as a kid Every one of you, I can, I can promise you this, you were at some point sitting on the seesaw up on the high side and the other person hopped off and you sort of did the, the vertebrae shattering crash down, that's what it's like right now.

This, this fulcrum, this, this point at which all of the gospel hinges right now, we're going to notice a marked and a noticeable change in direction here. So the entire first half of Mark's gospel has been spent answering the question, who is this man? And so this is why the first half of Mark's gospel has been so consumed with showing us the power of Jesus, the might of Jesus, the miracle working ability of Jesus, because Mark has been consumed with this question who is this man from this point on.

The question will now shift not from who is this man? Now it's going to go to why is he here? What is he here to do? Why has God sent him? Who is this man had to be answered in order for us to know why he's here. His work can only be work that comes out of who he is. So we had to first know who he is now knowing who he is.

You are the Christ. Everything will now shift to why is he here? What is he here to do? So Mark's theme, the theme of all, all the gospel of Mark, as we've said before, is this. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. That's what he said in the very first sentence of the gospel. And everything he said thereafter is tracing that theme.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God in flesh. The good news, the gospel, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God and He has come to us. So in Mark's gospel, there are six Six great confessions, six declarations that Jesus Christ is the Christ, the anointed one, the son of God. We saw the first one, of course, in chapter one, verse one, the good news of Jesus Christ, the son of God.

The second declaration is the one really, I guess you could not call it a declaration, but it comes in chapter four on the water at the end of the storm. It comes in the form of the question, who is this man? So that's not really a declaration, so in your notes it's got an asterisk beside it. But the answer is implied, isn't it?

The answer is implied, this man just spoke to a storm and it obeyed him. So clearly this man is more than just a man. So that's the second one. The third one, and in some ways, the pinnacle. Is the one before us. You are the Christ. The next one will come at the end of chapter 10 when blind Bartimaeus, or better, I guess more accurately formerly blind Bartimaeus will say, son of David, have mercy on me.

Now, that might not sound to us like that great of a confession because that language doesn't ring in our ears like it would ring in the ears of a first century Jew. But the title Son of David carries just as much Messianic freight. As does the title of Christ. Christ means the anointed one, Christos.

And in Jesus day, Christos could be used in many ways. It could be used in a spiritual way or in other ways to say this is the anointed one, the chosen one. Peter is, of course, using this in a spiritual way. But nevertheless, the term Christos, of course, carries spiritual freight, but Son of David also carries an equivalent amount of spiritual freight in another way.

So when he says, Son of David, have mercy on me, is when we get to that passage, we'll see that that is a highly messianic title as well. In addition to that, He asks him to have mercy on him in the form of his blindness. So to ask Jesus to have mercy on me by taking away my blindness, clearly, that's a declaration of who Jesus is.

Then the next declaration will come in chapter 14. This one will come at the lips of Jesus as He sends, on the night of His arrest, as He's before the high priest, and the high priest will mockingly

say, So you are the Christ? And Jesus will say, I am. And then the final, in another sense, the ultimate, the last declaration comes in chapter 15 in verse 39.

This one's at the lips of the centurion, the Roman centurion, which we're reminded once again that Mark is writing to Roman Christians. The Roman centurion will himself say, truly, this man was the son of God. So the declaration that's before us, you are the Christ. begins, well really this section really began in the previous passage, but this declaration is bookended by the next declaration at the end of chapter 10, the Declaration of Blind Bartimaeus.

And so this section, Mark likes to bookend things, we've talked about that. So this section is bookended by these two declarations and it's bookended, more importantly, by the healing of two blind men. The unnamed blind man of chapter 8. And that very, the most unusual of healings in which it takes place in two steps.

And then Jesus asks the man, can you see clearly? That is one bookend. And the other bookend is blind Bartimaeus, who will declare, son of David, have mercy on me. So between these two sections, this now comprises the next section to which we will look. Now this section, it was going to, we're going to notice a change in.

Just, uh, not only theme and the points that Mark is making, but we're also going to notice a change in context. We're going to notice a change in setting. Because the first half of Mark's gospel, I don't know, I'm sure you probably noticed, but the first half of Mark's gospel really took place Beside and on top of and in a whole lot of water.

Did you notice that? There was all these boat journeys Really the majority of the first half of the gospel takes place either on the water Beside the water just getting out of the boat Or in the water at Jesus baptism. The majority of the first half is somewhere to do with water. And in fact, three of the greatest instances in the first half take place on the boat.

That's where the disciples non-understanding and misunderstanding is displayed and demonstrated. Now at this section, we're going to notice that there is no more water. There are no more boats. Jesus, the last boat journey has taken place in Mark's gospel. And the boat journeys are now replaced with road journeys.

So what we're going to see now is on the way. And this is unmistakable. This is, you can't miss this because Mark again and again will say on the way, on the way this happens, on the way that happens. So we see here on the way, Jesus asked his disciples, who do people say I am? And the next chapter, on the way, Jesus is going to ask His disciples what they're arguing about.

The next chapter, chapter 10, on the way, Jesus is asked: What must I do to inherit eternal life? Then later on, on the way, Jesus will give the final of three teachings about His coming suffering. And that final teaching, that third of three teachings of His coming suffering, He's going to give it on the way, and at that point, the reader will be told, For the first time, where they are on their way to, which is Jerusalem.

Now we know where Jesus is going. We know that because we've read the Gospel of Mark. We've read the Gospels, and so we know that this is the journey to Jerusalem to die. But in Mark's Gospel, he's not told the reader that yet. The reader, if you're following along in Mark's Gospel, you've not yet been told where Jesus is going.

You won't be told that until the end of chapter 10 on the final teaching. The Son of Man must suffer and be killed and be raised. And at that point, we will be told that He's on His way to Jerusalem, on the way to Jerusalem to die. Right after that, we're going to encounter Bartimaeus, who is on the way, or literally beside the way.

Jesus will restore His sight, and after having His sight restored, He will then join Jesus once again. On the way to Jerusalem and then the very first verse of chapter 11 will be Jesus came to Jerusalem for the triumphal entry. You see, so the entire, this entire section is on the way to Jerusalem. So we'll begin to talk about that this morning, but then just to sort of notice.

A couple of themes that Mark is going to bring out. The first, the first half of the Gospel really was, again, consumed with the theme of who Jesus is and the power and the might of Jesus. The one who speaks a word and the seas are calm. He speaks a word and legion flees from him. He touches a leper and the leper is restored and cleansed.

But now the themes are going to shift. And they're going to shift in such a way that the incompetence, the spiritual incompetence of the disciples is now going to become more prominent. And more important, now you say, well, the spiritual incompetence of the disciples has been on display since chapter one.

And you'd be right. However, their spiritual dullness is really going to become even more apparent, and even more obvious, and even more meaningful. Because their spiritual non-comprehension in the first eight chapters really had to do with the fact that they just they couldn't understand Jesus parables.

They didn't understand the laws. They didn't understand the meanings of the feedings and all these things. All those things were tremendously important. But now their spiritual non-understanding is going to center upon one issue and that is The Messiah's need to suffer and die repeatedly. They are going to not understand why Jesus is saying that he must suffer and die.

So three times there are going to demonstrate on the way to Jerusalem, they're going to demonstrate that they don't understand that. And then all three times, Jesus will follow that by a teaching of, first of all, His suffering that is to come, and then in addition to that, the fact that if they're going to follow him, their path of following him will also be a path of suffering just like his.

And your notes here, chapter eight, this is the passage right before us. Peter will rebuke Jesus when he speaks of suffering. That will be followed immediately by, we know the passage, take up your cross and follow me. The next one will come in chapter 9. On the way, the disciples will be bickering about which of them is the greatest.

Jesus will answer that bickering by saying, whoever will be first must be last. And then finally in chapter 10, James and John are going to be grasping at the seat of power. Who's going to sit on the right? Who's going to sit on the left? Jesus will hear that. The disciples, by the way, are angry about that, but they're not angry because they're thinking James and John are out of line.

They're, they're angry because they also want the seats of power themselves. Jesus will hear all of that, and He will answer by saying, Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and

then He'll follow that up with, For not even the Son of Man came to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

So that's what's ahead of us in the next Three chapters between here towards the end of chapter 8 and to the end of chapter 10. I always find that helpful to see what's coming up. You can take that and use that in your own personal study time or you can kind of have that by you as we work through these next three chapters.

Or if you don't find it helpful, you can kick it aside. Either way, it's just helpful, I think, to sort of know what's coming. So now, knowing what's coming, let's dive into this section. Beginning from verse 27, we read, And Jesus went on with His disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way, He asked His disciples, Who do people say that I am?

And they told Him, John the Baptist. And others say Elijah. And others, one of the prophets. And he asked them, but who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, you are the Christ. And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. So as we begin in this pivotal section, we begin on this journey. We're told now they're near the villages of Caesarea Philippi.

Jesus went on. with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. We don't want to take too much time talking about Caesarea Philippi other than just to know that Caesarea Philippi is a different Philippi from the Philippi of Philippians. But Caesarea Philippi was a city located some 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee.

That's going to put Jesus at the furthest point from Jerusalem that's ever recorded. 25 or so miles north of the Sea of Galilee is going to put Jesus in a place that is as far from Jerusalem as He can possibly be. and still be within the land of Israel. He's going to be physically, geographically, as far from Jerusalem as he's ever recorded to be, which is meaningful because this distance is the distance that we're told he begins the journey to Jerusalem.

Now Caesarea Philippi was a city that was known, it was renowned in the ancient world. As a city that was, well, should we say, very enthusiastic of its worship of the pagan god by the name of Pan. You might remember as we studied Ephesians, we talked about how Ephesus was a city that was renowned for its worship of Diana or Artemis.

The city of Caesarea Philippi was somewhat equivalent to that in its worship of the pagan god Pan. So this place that was renowned for pagan worship is going to be the place in which Jesus sovereignly arranges that the greatest declaration of his identity to date is going to take place, which reminds me of an equivalent story, or a parallel story, I should say, from the Old Testament.

If you remember back from Elijah, the story of Elijah, the whole Mount Carmel incident, where Mount Carmel is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, demonstration of who God is, of the person of God, the identity and the power of God. And we saw in that passage that this place takes place in Mount Carmel, which was a place that was renowned in the ancient world for pagan worship.

So God chooses a place that's known for its pagan worship in which to demonstrate his identity and his sovereignty and his power. The same thing or similar thing at least happens here in Caesarea Philippi. So Jesus went on with his disciples. He went on with his disciples. To the villages of Caesarea Philippi.

And on the way, he asked his disciples, Who do people say that I am? So that's a logical question, right? Any leader of any movement is going to have some level of concern over what the popular opinion of him is. Who are people saying that I am? So it's natural for us to think that Jesus would ask that question until we, of course, are reminded of a couple of things.

First of all, Jesus didn't have to ask anybody. What people thought of him, Jesus is the one that, remember, we're told in chapter two, he perceived in his spirit what they were thinking. He perceived in his spirit that they were saying in their home, in their own hearts, who, who can forgive sins but God alone.

Furthermore, we're reminded in John's gospel, John says that nobody had to tell Jesus the hearts of men. He knew the hearts of men. So Jesus doesn't need information here. He's not asking for information because he's interested in knowing what people think about. Furthermore, And even more consequently, furthermore, Jesus was one who put no stock, he placed no value in what people who didn't believe in him thought of him.

We know that because even Jesus's enemies said so. They will say to Jesus in Mark chapter 12, teacher, we know that you're not someone who places stock in people's opinions of you. Now, if your enemy gives you a compliment. Then that's something that's pretty trustworthy. And so one of the things that Jesus's enemies said about him was, Teacher, we know that you don't really care about the opinions of people.

You only care about the opinion of God. So Jesus, resoundingly, we can say this with authority, Jesus is not concerned about popular opinion of him. He's asking the question for the same reason that he has done these other recent oddities. The oddity of the healing of the, of the deaf man, the blind man, the Syrophenician woman.

Jesus is establishing a type of object lesson for the benefit of His disciples. He's doing the same thing here. He asked this question for the benefit of His disciples because He's setting them up for the next question, of course. So this is something else that's going to change here, beginning in chapter, towards the end of chapter eight here is Jesus will now begin asking probing questions.

Jesus has not been one to ask questions, or at least not recorded for us yet. But He's going to begin to be one who is probing His disciples with these intuitive questions. Who do people say that I am? Now verse 28, they told Him, John the Baptist, and others say Elijah, and others one of the prophets. So here's this threefold list of who the popular opinion of who Jesus is of the day.

Uh, two of the three kind of makes sense to us. The third really is hard to understand, John the Baptist, not really sure where that one came from. We remember that Herod thought that perhaps Jesus was John the Baptist, but this is really hard to understand because nowhere does scripture connect the two in the same person like this.

Furthermore, Jesus has been seen with John the Baptist. Remember chapter one, he's been seen in public. with John the Baptist. It's kind of hard to be mistaken for someone when you've been seen together with that person. So that was a little bit hard to understand, but nevertheless it's there. A lot of people seem to be saying this man is, maybe he's John the Baptizer, maybe he's John the Baptist.

But then the other two, of course Elijah, some say that you're Elijah. We remember that Old Testament prophecy that says, Before the great and terrible day of the Lord, Elijah will come. That comes to you in Malachi 4, verses 5 and 6, which are the last two verses of your Old Testament. So now you can impress all your friends when you're having a conversation with your friends and they ask you, Where does the Old Testament say that Elijah must come first?

Oh, that's the last two verses of the Old Testament. They're easy to find, too. So you can impress your friends that way. But Malachi Tell us that Elijah must come before the great and terrible day of the Lord. So some people are reading that and they're saying, well, maybe this man Jesus is that man Elijah come back.

Now, we're not going to explore into that further because in John's gospel, he delves into that subject and he says, indeed, Elijah has come, but you didn't see him. And so the teaching that comes out of that is a spiritual resurgence of Elijah there. But we don't have time to delve into that. But there's the Elijah thing that's out there.

But then there's also one of the prophets. Some are saying that you're one of the prophets. Now Matthew is going to tell us in Matthew 16 that the prophet that the people have in mind is the prophet Jeremiah. Maybe you're Jeremiah that's come. This reminds us of Deuteronomy 18 and verse 18 where we're told, other places too, where we're told that God's, God will say, I will raise up another prophet.

And he will speak my words, I will put my words into his mouth, and he will speak my words, and the people will listen. So, those are three opinions of who this man Jesus might be. So a couple things for us to notice in those three popular opinions of Jesus. Number one is this. Even Jesus enemies can't explain what he's doing outside of supernatural explanations.

So Jesus teaching, his miracles, the things that Jesus is doing, No one can explain this without using some sort of spiritual, supernatural explanation to explain what this man is doing. Just as even Jesus enemies will say to him, We know that you are sent from God because no one who's not sent from God can do the things that you're doing.

Nicodemus will say that to Jesus in John chapter 3. We know you have to be from God for the things that you're doing. So they are It is resorting to some type of supernatural explanation. But then the other thing to really see, and this is, I think, where this is helpful for us today, is to see as they are describing who they think this man Jesus is, these three choices, these three options, are any of them insulting to Jesus or demeaning to Jesus?

Are any of them pejorative in any way? No, these are quite lofty opinions of who Jesus might be. For anyone other than Jesus Christ. To be compared to John the Baptizer? What a thing to say about somebody. To say, well, perhaps this man is Elijah. Again, for anyone other than the Son of God, what a complimentary thing.

So this says to us something about the popular opinion of Jesus day, which was mostly, what, quite positive. We know the Pharisees hated him. We know they're trying to kill him. But the majority, Jesus isn't asking about the Pharisees opinion. He's asking about the people's opinion. The majority of people's opinion is largely positive, but get this, it's positive based on a redefinition of who Jesus is.



You see what they did? They redefined who Jesus is. They lowered Jesus down to the level of prophet. And having redefined him, reimagined him, they now give to him accolades. That's exactly what we've been doing for 2,000 years, isn't it? Do you know that the popular opinion of Jesus, if you were to say, what's most people's opinion of Jesus?

Do most people have a high opinion of Jesus or a low opinion of Jesus? Well, the answer to that question matters. And the answer to that question depends on what understanding you have of Jesus. The popular opinion of the Jesus that scripture presents to us, which is the Jesus who says to us, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father, but by me. The popular opinion of that Jesus has always been very low and always will be very low until the day that every knee bows to him. But what most people do in our day, just like in Jesus' day, is they redefine him to be something less than what he is. Still high and lofty.

And having done that, they now have a high opinion of him. Do you know that every religion in the world has a high view of Jesus? Every religion, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, uh, the false religions of Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, seventh Day Adv Adventist, Roman Catholics, they all have a high view of Jesus Christ after they've redefined him, after they've made him to be something less.

God incarnate, they then give to him high accolades.

So we've been doing this for 2000 years, folks, we've been taking the reality of Jesus Christ presented to us in the scriptures, bringing it down to a level that we can manage, or to use a phrase that most of us will remember, taking him by force and making him king. Remember that? Taking him by force and making him king.

We now have a Jesus that everyone can celebrate. This reminds me of the words of C. S. Lewis. Most of us, maybe. A lot of us, if you haven't read *Mere Christianity*, you should. It's a great little book, 120 or so pages, well worth your time. But in *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis Jesus tackles this with the best words that I think anybody has ever written about this.

Just to kind of read a little quote from *Mere Christianity* in your notes here, it says this, I am trying to here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him, meaning Jesus, which is to say, I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great and moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.

That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic On the level of the man who says he's a poached egg. There's his British humor there. Or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice.

Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool. You can spit at him and kill him as a demon. Or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let, let us not come to him with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher.

He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. We couldn't have said it better ourselves, could we? Jesus did not leave the option open to revere him as some great teacher or some great man because Jesus repeatedly said the kind of things that either would make him a madman, a lunatic. A devil from hell trying to deceive everyone or the Son of God.

Those are the only three options. And so this idea that, that we can admire Jesus after making him something a little different than what the scriptures present him to be, the same thing that Jesus encounters here. Who do men say that I am? Now, verse 29, but he asked him, but who do you say that I am? So in that verse there, the you is highly emphatic.

If you want to, you can take your pen and you can underline you, because that's how Mark wrote it. You yourself, you, that's who I'm asking now. You yourself. Who do you say? Now, if you want to furthermore mark up your Bible, which I like working up my Bible. If you want to furthermore mark up your Bible, you can take your pen and you can draw an arrow from that phrase right up to verse 23, where Jesus asks the blind man, can you now see?

Do you see? That's the parallel. Can you now see? Now he asks his disciples, who do you say that I am? Can you now see? Can you now see me? We've done the two feedings. We've done the calming of the sea. We've done the, uh, the speaking to the wind and the waves. I've opened the ears of the blind man. I have, uh, opened the eye, opened the ears of the deaf man, opened the blind, blind man eyes.

We have done the whole thing through the, through the land of the Gentiles to fulfill that prophecy that out of the desert comes these living waters and you'll know that your God has come to you when the blind see and the deaf hear and the mute sing. So Jesus will now say, can you now see? Who do you now say that I am?

Peter answered him, you are the Christ. So that is the first time in Mark's gospel that his disciples have called him anything but teacher. You are the Christ. Now, this was not something that we should regard as maybe this spontaneous reaction that Jesus caught him off guard in this moment of euphoria and Peter, like Peter always does, sort of gets ahead of himself, his mouth gets ahead of his brain, and he just sort of spouts out like a deer in the headlights, You are the Christ.

That's not how we see this. Instead, we see this as the culmination of months and months of being with Jesus. And experiencing his teaching, living with him, seeing him, being, being followers of him. After months of this, this is now the culmination that Peter now says, you are the Christ. So this is a phenomenal declaration.

As we know, we'll get into this in just a moment. This declaration that Peter makes is fraught. with theological error that we'll sort of peel that back in just a few moments. But even setting that aside, even recognizing that this is still a monumental declaration. You are the Christ. This is a phrase that is freighted with theological meaning.

It's freighted with messianic meaning. And for Peter to declare, even in his faulty understanding, for him to declare you are the Christ, this is indeed Probably Peter's second greatest moment. Second only to perhaps Acts chapter 2, when he stands up before the crowd of Jews to say, you are the ones who are guilty of Christ's death.

So this is perhaps his second greatest moment. But notice, first of all, the humility of Peter. We've noticed this before. In Mark's gospel, which Mark's gospel, once again, is the gospel, we could say, of Peter. Because Peter is the one. It's like Mark and Peter are here beside one another. And they're writing this together.

And Mark is writing down Peter's experiences. And so Mark's gospel, which is the recollection of Peter's experiences, it's always the gospel that shows the least positive light on Peter. The other gospels, particularly Matthew and Luke, will always show Peter in a better light than does Mark's gospel. And that's a reflection of the man's humility.

So think about, for example, when Peter gets out of the boat and walks on the water for a few steps. That's a pretty positive thing. No other person has ever done such a thing. And so it's a pretty, pretty positive accomplishment that Peter would trust Jesus in such a way to get out of the boat that's left out of Mark's Gospel.

Or, uh, the declaration here that's before us. This, this, this really just shows us, I think, Peter's humility because the declaration that we're given here is simply, You are the Christ. Now Luke's recording of this is fuller, but Matthew's recording of this is the fullest. And so in Matthew 16, Matthew records that Peter says not only you are the Christ.

But he goes on to say, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. To which Jesus will respond with those praises, we'll talk about it in a little bit, those praises that say, Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jon. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to you, You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

Wow. Is anybody else in Scripture have that sort of thing said about them? That's quite a thing to have Jesus say about you. Now we know the confusion and Peter, you are this rock, and we know that Jesus is not saying, I'm going to build my church on Peter, but nevertheless, Peter is at the center of these accolades from Jesus.

Yet when we come to Mark's gospel, it's as though Peter is looking over Mark's shoulder and Mark's saying, didn't you say more than that, Peter? I've heard that you said more than that. No, no, that's all we need. That's all we need, Mark. That's all we need. But, but didn't Jesus say, blessed are you? And didn't Jesus go on to talk about on this rock and everything?

We don't need to say that, Mark. They'll get the point with you are the Christ. Just leave it at that. You see the humility of the man? This man who has gone from the one who is full of pride and full of himself Now, to one who shows the humility of a man whose character has been molded into the character of Christ.

Peter's greatest area in his life in which his sin was most evident is also the area in his life in which the grace of Christ has been the most transformative. And that is a clear sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. When the area of your life That in which sin was most dominant and most evident becomes the area of your life in which grace of Christ and the transformation of Christ is also most evident.

That's a clear sign of the work of the Holy Spirit. So notice, we notice His humility here. Peter answered Him, You are the Christ. So let's now think for just a few more minutes on this

declaration, this answer that He gives to Jesus. You are the Christ. And I want to just think through this declaration as Problematic as it as we're going to see that it is nevertheless, is also a very important teaching point, a very important model for us, for true and genuine saving faith for true confession of Christ.

So first, let's think about the circumstance in which this confession was made. One of the most difficult things I think about studying the gospels. is getting the timeline. Because as we've noted many times before, none of the gospel writers are particularly concerned with giving a chronological account.

That's not to say that nothing in the gospels is chronological. All the gospels will have, in fact, large sections that are chronological. But the overall picture is not a chronological picture. And that's not something that is exclusive to the writers of the Gospels. That was something that was common in the ancient world.

That when you would write a biography or you'd write a story, you weren't particularly concerned about getting the chronology exactly right. You would just write the story as it seemed to fit the theme that you were teaching. And so the Gospel writers follow this same sort of thing. They are not concerned very highly at all with chronological accounts.

And so oftentimes we find that the chronology between the Gospels is a little bit different. And that can really cause us to, to struggle to get a good picture of what was the chronology of Jesus's life. So as we read this account, this seems to us to read as though that this declaration that Jesus is the Christ is going to come at a time in which Jesus's popularity is at its greatest.

Doesn't it feel that way? Because we've talked about that over and over. The size of the crowds, the response to Jesus is at its height. Jesus, here by the Sea of Galilee, there will be crowds that are so large that He'll need His disciples to get a boat, to have a boat ready just in case the crowd is going to crush Him and He needs to get away from the crowd.

The enthusiasm and the size of the crowds is tremendous. And here comes this declaration at the end of chapter eight. So it seems as though that this declaration occurs at the peak of Jesus's popularity. However, Jesus did not ask this declaration of Peter. At the point at which his popularity was the greatest.

Instead, Mark has reached into another section of Jesus ministry and pulled from another time period of Jesus ministry and brought that into this account because again, as we've seen over and over, Mark is arranging stories to tell a point. And he has pulled this story Jesus's life that we know of as the latter part of John chapter six.

You familiar with John chapter six? In the latter part of John chapter six, we're told that Jesus begins to teach hard things like, you must eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink the blood of the Son of Man. If you do not eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, you have no part of me. To which we are told in John six and verse 66.

That people found that to be a hard teaching and we're told that many people who were following him Stopped following him at that point. You see Jesus right now as not at the apex of his popularity Jesus's popularity instead has waned and the disciples have seen the crowds shrink and The disciples have seen the enthusiasm cool to Jesus,

Jesus doesn't ask Peter: Who do you say I am? In the midst of the screaming, shouting crowds where Jesus has to raise his voice even to be heard. "Hey, Peter, who do you say I am?" All these people are cheering, yeah, Jesus, rah, rah, rah. Jesus asked Peter, who am I? At the very time in which Peter has been asked by Jesus just recently another question.

You going to leave too? To which Peter says, we don't have anywhere to go. Because only you have the words of life. Shortly after that is when Jesus says, Who do you say I am? You see, Peter's confession of Jesus has to be a confession that can be readily given when you're alone.

To confess that Jesus is the Christ and a room full of other people who are confessing the same thing is no hard thing.

But to confess that Jesus is the Christ, when you've seen disillusionment, when you've seen the looks on people's faces as they begin to realize, Oh, this guy just wasn't who we thought he was. This is not going where I thought this was going. Oh well, I'm going back to fishing. I'm going back to farming.

That's the only true confession. The confession that can be made in the face of the balloon that's going flat. And people seem to have lost interest and left and gone. You know what it's like to be part of something? In which people were excited and enthusiastic and then all of a sudden, things seem to be deflating?

And excitement tends to have waned and you look around and you start asking, well, where did they go and where did they go? You know what that's like? I know what that's like. And you know what that's like, too. Jesus knows what that's like. Peter knows what that's like. And it's only in that context, Jesus waits to that time to say, Peter, who am I?

Are you going to confess me to be the Christ only in the resounding cheers of the crowds? Or can you confess me to be the Christ when everyone appears to be abandoning me? When everyone appears to be, have figured out that I'm not who they thought I was. Because that's the only confession that can be genuine.

The other thing to consider is this confession that Jesus makes, of course, or this confession that Peter makes, of course, is wrought with problems, isn't it? You are the Christ. We're going to see the problems crop up in just the very next verse. Jesus is going to say, all right now, Peter, we've got that much.

Now, let me start to teach you about what's going to happen to the Christ. Now that you've got who I am, now let me start to teach you why I've come. I've come to suffer. I've come to die. And then the problems are going to come out. Wait, wait, wait, wait, Jesus, hang on. We're not proclaiming you to be the Christ.

to be on that path. So let's get you back on the rails before we get off the rails too far. So we know that his confession is a confession that is lacking, should we say, in accurate understanding of who Jesus is. Now, we know that because Peter's understanding of the Messiah is an understanding that was packed.

That was replete with ideas of a Messiah who was politically victorious of a Messiah, who would rid the land of these gentiles who were ruling over them, and a Messiah who would once again bring glory to Israel. Now, if you have in any length of time, been part of the church and have any listen to messages, uh, of this topic at all, you have heard this, you have heard that the disciples had this understanding that Jesus.

was going to be this Messiah who is victorious. You've heard that, we all understand that, we all believe that. But let's just pause a moment and let's just ask the question, is that what the Bible says? Or is that just what we've been told? Because we must be careful, because this is pivotal. If Jesus is being proclaimed as the Anointed One and those anointing are fraught with the errors of who this Messiah really is and why He's come, Then we better be sure of what we're talking about.

So does the New Testament tell us that the people of Jesus day were mistaken in who they thought the Messiah was going to be? No, it does not. Instead, what we find when we turn to the New Testament and ask that question, what did people think Messiah was going to be? The answer is there, but it's not there in a concise way.

It's not there in so many words, so to speak. So when we turn to the New Testament, what we find is that people's reaction to Jesus is so telling of what their thoughts of Jesus was to be. That that helps us to see what their understanding was. So we see this again and again. We see reactions to Jesus, and if we ask the question, why would they react that way?

Then the answer says, says to us, well, it makes sense that they would react that way because their understanding of a Messiah was the understanding of a victorious messiah. We see this again and again in places like Acts chapter 1. So, is it at this time that you're going to restore the kingdom to Israel?

Or the words of James and John when the Samaritan villages reject Jesus. Jesus, you want us to call down fire on this village here, right? That is coming from an understanding that Messiah would be listened to and obeyed, or you'd be destroyed. Or Peter's words to Jesus. You will never wash my feet. Why would he react that way to Jesus?

Because his understanding of Messiah was a messiah that would never kneel and wash feet, you see? And so you kind of put all that together. It is like it's baked in the cake, so to speak. You know, you know what it means to be baked in the cake when you bake a cake and you know, you may, may, you put a egg in the cake batter and you mix it all up and you bake the cake, and then you, you take a slice of the cake and you say.

Where's the egg? What's in there? Well, show it to me. I can't. But it's in there. It's just part of it now, baked in the cake of the New Testament. It's the perception that when Messiah came, Messiah would be victorious. And we see that by seeing people's reactions when Jesus demonstrated something of humility or something of weakness or something of suffering.

So that's what we see in the New Testament. But let's now ask ourself, is that enough? Can that give us real confidence that the opinions of Jesus were wrong of the day? Or I should say the opinions of Messiah were wrong in the day. And the best place we can see that is to look to what Jews were writing right before Jesus came.

So let's look to a passage that comes in the Psalms of Solomon. Who likes the, the Psalms of Solomon? You like to read the Psalms of Solomon? Oh, your pastor is so tricky. He will, he is, you have got to watch him. He will, he will sneak up on you because the Psalms of Solomon is not in your Bible. You may be thinking the Song of Solomon.

Or the Psalms of David, but the Psalms of Solomon is an apocryphal book. Now the books of the Apocrypha, if you're not familiar with them, they are writings that took place largely between the close of the Old Testament canon and right around the time of Jesus or a little bit later. And so these books, these apocryphal books, You probably heard some of the names of them, they're the books, the, the Maccabean books, the books of Maccabees, Esdras, the books of Esdras, uh, the Shepherd of Hermes, um, Psalms of Solomon and some others.

Now these are not scripture. These were written by Jews and largely godly Jews. And they can have some helpful things in them, but they have errors. And so here's the important thing to see is the church has never considered them to be Scripture. They've never considered them to be inspired Scripture.

Which, by the way, is why in your notes I even put them in a different font. You see, I even protected the font. Because it's not, I don't want you to be confused, you're not looking at Scripture here. You're looking, though, at writings of Jewish people. A couple hundred years before the arrival of Christ.

Now, what they were saying about Messiah at that time will prove very helpful for us, won't it? And here's what they were saying. Look at this passage. See, O Lord, and raise up their king for them, a son of David. There is the messianic title. A son of David. For the proper time that you see God to rule over Israel, your servant.

And here it is. And undergird him with strength, for To shatter unrighteous rulers, cleanse Jerusalem from the nations that trample it in destruction, to expel sinners from the inheritance in wisdom, in righteousness, to rub out their arrogance of the sinner like a potter's vessel, to crush all their support with an iron rod, to destroy lawless nations by the word of His mouth, for Gentiles to flee from His face at His threats.

And we could go on. There are other places we could see this. There's another quote there from Esdras. We could look at some of the Targum teachings from 100 to maybe the 2nd century, 3rd century after Christ. And we would see a prevailing understanding that Messiah would come and crush the Gentiles. He would crush those who rule over Jerusalem, over Israel, and He would bring victory and glory back to Israel.

That is the context in which Jesus lived. That was the scuttlebutt of the day, that's what people were talking about. As the Jews were looking for Messiah, that's what was on their mind. And so when Peter declares, you are the Christ, this Christ that he's declaring is necessarily wrapped up in what his culture has taught him to see in the Christ.

It's interesting. There was an experiment that was done some years ago that used a device called stereopticons. You might know what a stereopticon is. I'd be amazed if anybody knew. I had to look it up myself. So a stereopticon, you know what stereo means, right? We usually talk about stereo with audio.

And so you have one ear, that has one sound in another ear that's a little bit different and that gives you the stereo effect, right? Well, a stereopticon has to do with visual, with seeing. And so a stereopticon is a device that you put on, and it will give different images to different eyes.

It'll give one eye, one image and another eye, another image. And so they did this test. They had all these test subjects from different cultures around the world. And what they wanted to know was, how does culture inform what you see? Because as most of us are aware, your eyes give your signal, you give your brain one picture, right?

Your, your, your brain doesn't walk around. seeing two pictures of the world. Your brain walks around seeing one picture of the world because your brain takes two pictures and makes them one. So the, the test was to say, what if we take people from different cultures and we, we put different images on different eyes, what are we going to learn?

So they would, they would put this image, this, uh, stereopticon on people and what they found was without fail Without fail, the person's culture always informed what they saw. For example, they would put the device on an American, and they would show in one eye a baseball player, and in the other eye a bullfighter.

And the American would always see the baseball player, because that's what his culture had taught him to see. The Mexican would always see the bullfighter, because that's what his culture had taught him to see. And they did this with all kinds of cultures, all kinds of people, and they found that it was invariable.

And it had nothing to do with dominant eye, weak eye, because they would switch the images back and forth and get the same results. And what they discovered was, just as your brain takes two images and makes one of them, so also that one image is informed by the culture in which you were raised. In other words, you see what your culture has taught you to see.

Now, we know that to be true. That may be surprising to us to hear it put in those terms, but we know that to be true. Just think about hearing. Just think about the fact that we all know this is true, that you hear sometimes what you want to hear. One of the things that is remarkable that I've noticed with all six of our kids is they were learning to read, and in those early stages of learning to read, when they're struggling through sounding out the words, What always happened was, as they were struggling to sound out the word, their brain supplied the word that they thought would be next.

And it had nothing to do sometimes with what the word actually was. Because their brains were telling them what the word should be. And we see this in many areas of life. I can't tell you the number of times that I have After a message or something, somebody has, has come to me and say, you know, you said this, and that was so profound.

That was so insightful. And I'm thinking, I didn't say that you heard something that I didn't say, because that's the way our brains work. So now when we come to Peter's confession, Peter's confession, he has seen the Christ, but just like the stereopticon, his culture is telling him what the Christ should be, which by the way, here's a side note.

This principle is one of the reasons that we must be so diligent in studying our scriptures. Because we don't want to know what our culture thinks scriptures should say, we want to know what the



scriptures say. Which is why we must often do so much work to understand the culture to which it was written, so that we understand the actual text and not what our culture would think the text says.

Okay, but that's a side note. That's a message for another day. Back to Peter. Peter's confession was wrapped up in what his upbringing and his culture had taught him the Christ should look like. And so as he confesses, you are the Christ. He's right. And his proclamation is a glorious statement of faith.

Because even thinking that Messiah is going to be this glorious, victorious Messiah, Even so, Jesus has not really demonstrated a lot of that, has he? He's demonstrated power. But at every turn, Jesus has avoided political arguments. Remember when they say, they come to Jesus and they say, Hey Jesus, what do you say about those Those people that Herod killed, those Jews that he killed when they were offering their sacrifices.

Jesus says, I don't want to talk about that. I want to talk about your sin. Or they come to Jesus and they say, Jesus, we got this problem. My brother won't share the inheritance with me. I don't want to talk about that. I want to talk about your need for repentance. Right? So Jesus has avoided at every turn being ensnared in anything political.

Jesus, should we pay taxes to Caesar or not? Well, I don't want to talk about Caesar. I want to talk about you. And I want to talk about your heart. So Jesus hasn't really given Peter a whole lot to believe in by way of a glorious, victorious Messiah either. So his confession is still a statement of faith.

Nevertheless, it's a statement of faith that is uninformed. Well, actually, I shouldn't say uninformed, but informed by the wrong thing. Informed by a faulty view of Messiah. Of a lowly view of Messiah. That His first coming is a coming of glory and power. And so this is why Jesus will begin at this point to correct this.

So now, here's the takeaway for us. Jesus is, or I'm sorry, Peter's confession got all the right words, right? They got the words right. You are the Christ. In Matthew's, uh, account of it, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. That's 100 percent theologically correct, but here's an instance in which we see plainly that sometimes the words out of our mouth aren't necessarily revealing the right understanding of a heart.

Jesus said your words are a good indicator of your heart, but He didn't say that every word out of your mouth accurately portrays the right heart motive. And this is what we see in Peter's case. He's speaking the right words. But his confession of the Christ is still deficient. We live in a culture and in a time in which knowledge of the truth of Christ, knowledge of the gospel is so prevalent to such a degree that the right words are so easy.

And the right words can be spoken literally from any type of heart. Even Jesus acknowledged this. He said, there'll be many that come to be and say, Lord, Lord, did we not perform many mighty signs? Did we not cast out many demons in your name? He'll say, depart me from me. I never knew you. Yet they had the right words.

And so this is an illustration of how the mouth can speak the right words. But those words can be slogan. And brothers and sisters, our confession of the Christ must go far beyond slogan. It must

go far beyond just words. You know, a parakeet can be trained to say you are the Christ. A monkey can be trained to do it in sign language or maybe even write it on a chalkboard.

The words themselves mean nothing unless they come from the heart that is rightly informed. And believes and trusts upon that as well. The demons themselves will say the same words in Mark's gospel. We know who you are. You are the Mighty One. You are the Most High God. The words themselves are insufficient.

We must ensure that our confession of Christ goes beyond slogan. It goes beyond words that we've been taught our whole life. It must come from a heart that sees Him as the scriptures show Him to us and believes and trusts. Now, let's also notice the necessity of this confession. In John's Gospel in Chapter 8, Jesus is going to be enthralled in this discussion with the Pharisees and the discussion is going to be about his identity and Jesus is going to conclude that section in verse 24 with these words, Unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.

Now, when Jesus says die in your sins, that's Bible speak for eternal damnation. Jesus says, Unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. This passage, cannot be preached, at least properly, without the application that all of us, I take it, have heard every time this passage is preached or taught, which is the application to say, this is the most important question of your entire existence.

Who do you say He is? Which is why it's put in the emphatic, you yourself, who do you say? There is no more important question because in Jesus's words, unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins. Now, to believe that He is the Christ, as we see already and we're going to see over the next two weeks, It means much more than just saying the words, and it means much more than just believing in a redefined Jesus.

But nevertheless, it doesn't mean less than that. It means more than that, but not less. You must believe that He is the Christ or you will die in your sins. And then finally, finally, the last thing for us to see is just simply this. And that's the blessed condition of the one who confesses. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus responds with those well known words, Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

So Jesus is saying, You are blessed, Simon. Peter, you are blessed. And why is Peter blessed? Because he has figured all this out? Because he has closely watched Jesus? And he's put the pieces together? Jesus says you are blessed because God has touched you. That was the point last week, the divine touch.

Without the divine touch, nothing happens. And so that was the point of the blind man. That was the point of the deaf and mute man. That was the point of the two feedings. And Jesus says it explicitly in Matthew's Gospel. Without the divine touch, nothing happens. So what Matthew says explicitly, Mark told us in stories.

The deaf man, the blind man, now Peter's confession. So Mark tells us this in stories, and his stories are telling us the same thing. Without this divine action, without this intervention from God, none of this will become apparent to you. You will see none of this. You will perceive none of this. But with the divine touch, notice what Jesus says.

Blessed are you. That proclamation of a benediction upon Peter. Brothers and sisters, we can read that proclamation with a one to one correlation to us. Just as Peter said, or just as Jesus says, you are blessed, Peter, because God has opened your eyes. So also, if God has opened your eyes, Jesus is likewise saying to you, you are blessed.

You are blessed because he has opened your eyes to see. He has opened your eyes to perceive.