

Trinitarian Congregational Church
TAKE OUT

August 23, 2020

Announcements

Next week we will be gathering for our riverside worship - 10 am at Pat and Tom Shearer's barn. Please wear a mask, bring a chair and a lunch, if you desire. Contact Pat if you need more information.

Prelude

Climb Every Mountain

[Video - <https://youtu.be/RPaD4L127gk>]

Call to Worship

One: Let us give whole-hearted thanks to our God.

Let our spirits soar in praise to God alone.

All: We give thanks to God for his steadfast love and faithfulness.

We marvel over his glory and all that God has done.

One: Let us remember the ancestors of our faith.

Let us also seek to walk with God in humility and hope.

All: We ponder over God's loving-kindness to the generations of his people.

We trust in God's promise to bless all who follow him.

One: Let us affirm our faith in the One God has revealed.

Let us offer our lives to him in worship and service.

All: We have gathered as disciples of Christ.

May our faith be matched in our labors to build up the reign of God on earth.

Gathering Prayer

Loving God, we come into your presence today awed by your faithfulness and compassion. You are so glorious that it is beyond our comprehension, yet you remain attentive to the lowliest among us. You have provided for our needs and forgiven us our sins. You have been faithful through the generations and continue to call us to lives of faith and faithfulness. And so we come before you today, just as we are, to seek your blessing and to offer ourselves to you in worship and service. Speak to us in ways that will open our ears to your call. Reveal your truth in ways that will open our eyes to your presence. Name us and claim us for your glory, and then send us out into the world to live and work as witnesses of your grace. Amen.

Gloria Patri [Audio - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUBxpypSblw>]

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost

As it was in the beginning, Is now and ever shall be,

World without end, Amen, Amen.

Scriptures

Isaiah 51:1-6

1 Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. 2 Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. 3 For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. 4 Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples. 5 I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope. 6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be forever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

Psalm 138

1 I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise;
2 I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.
3 On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.
4 All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth.
5 They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD.
6 For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly; but the haughty he perceives from far away.
7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me.
8 The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Matthew 16:13-20

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 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. 18 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. 19 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." 20 Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Musical Reflection

How Firm a Foundation /Rock of Ages

[Video --<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YMtxD7N9ks>]

Sermon

A Profound Statement Matt 16:13-20

Who are you? That question is so common that we often don't think much about it. But it is an important question. Maybe even a profound question. In the past few weeks I have been asking and answering that question a lot. "So Rosemary, tell us a little about yourself" is asking "Who are you?" You know my name - so the question is more than that. Who are you? There are a lot of answers. I am the wife of Greg Dawson, I am an animal lover. I am a hiker. I am an introvert. I am the designated pastor of TCC.

Answering the question "Who are you" depends on a lot of things - most of all the information you are looking for. It can be as simple as getting my basic data - name, age, address. It can be gathering information about my abilities - my education, pastoral experience and training, maybe even some of my personal background. But then there is also the question 'who are you' that really wants to know your personality, your character, even your heart and soul. Answering the question "who are you" is not so simple after all.

Today in our Scripture passage we see Jesus exploring that very question although it is phrased somewhat differently. And I think Jesus is looking for something special as he asks the question. Jesus begins his inquiry by asking his disciples "Who do people say the Son of man is?" That is a 'who are you question' if ever I heard one.

But why would Jesus ask it? Doesn't he know who he is? Of course he does. Is he concerned with his public image, with the twitter feed of the day? Not really. But just before this event the Scribes and Pharisees tried to put him to a test. They wanted him to perform a sign. It seems like a simple enough request. They wanted to see evidence of his authority or relationship with God. That is why Jesus firsts ask "who do people say that I am". What do people see in me? Do they see a charlatan or a prophet, a con-man or a saint?

And the public answer is intriguing. "Some say you are John the Baptist (that is, his successor) others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Yes, people were identifying him as a genuine man of God; that Jesus stands in a long line of servants of God. That is not an unfamiliar answer. Even today Jesus is recognized as a peacemaker and worker for social justice, as a moral teacher, and even as an enlightened spiritual guide. These are the answers of people who know Jesus at a distance. They are the ones who may have heard his sermons or witnessed his miracles or even eaten with him at some dinner party given in his honor.

But Jesus does not seem satisfied with that answer. He doesn't condemn them; in fact they are recognizing his relationship to God. But he seems to be going further than that. Instead of being satisfied with the public answer; he wants to hear the private answer. So he turns to those who know him most, who have, so to speak, the inside scoop on Jesus, the ones who have seen him away from the crowds, who have seen him on his good days and his bad days. He wants to know "But who do you say that I am?"

That is a serious question. When you ask that question to your closest friends you have to be ready for almost any answer because you are asking for their truth. You are not playing games, and you are not looking for an ego stroke. And so Simon gives him his honest insight, the truth about this man standing in front of him. "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

That is a profound statement. You are the Messiah. Simon has been raised in the Jewish traditions he knew the law and the prophets he knew the covenant and the promises. And he has been sifting through everything he knows and everything he has seen and he tries to put it together. And everything the crowds are saying just doesn't fit. John the Baptist (number 2) doesn't fit, even though Jesus speaks forthrightly about repentance. Elijah, the promised forerunner, the one who will prepare people for the coming of God doesn't fit either. Nor does the moniker of 'a prophet' seem to work. They are all just too small. There is only one designation that is right and true; one that any person in Jesus' day would struggle against. Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, God's Anointed One.

That is a huge claim. That word, that name, puts him above David, above Moses, even above Father Abraham. The Messiah is God's ultimate gift. He is the one in whom all the hopes of humanity and all the promises of God meet. And that alone gives him all authority and all power among the people of God. It is no light thing. I wonder if Simon cringed as he said it. He was laying claim to everything, everything the generations of the faithful have been looking for and he squarely places it on Jesus.

And then he hears Jesus' response. "Bless you Simon... flesh and blood have not revealed this to you but my father who is in heaven." Simon you get it! Finally you know. You know in a way that is not public opinion or what your mamma and papa taught you. You know for yourself. You know because the light of God has touched your heart and opened your eyes. God has told you the truth that goes beyond the mind, and you have claimed it for yourself.

That is a profound moment. And now something even more profound happens. After Simon names Jesus, and claims God's truth - now God names him and claims him. The Message Bible puts it this way "And now I will tell you who you are, who you really are... you are Peter." That is a profound statement and a powerful statement. Who Simon is, is suddenly changed because of his bold move, his statement and acknowledgment of Christ. He has taken hold of God's Son; now God's Son takes hold of him. His identity changes. It gets shifted into higher gear. He was a descendent of Abraham now he is a true son of Israel. He was a Jew, now he is God's own. God claims Simon like he has claimed so many before him; the way he claimed Abram and renamed him Abraham and Sarai, Sarah. The way he took hold of Jacob at the Jabbok and blessed him to become Israel. Or the way he took Saul and transformed him into Paul.

By his blessing and his renaming Simon Jesus was bringing him to a new place; a new place of faith, yes, but also a new identity and a new purpose. "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church. And the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Oh there have been debates on that statement, let me tell you. We don't want to think that Jesus is saying what he is saying. We want to back it up, but we can't. It is a profound statement. Jesus changes Simon, and Simon is changed. Simon is now Peter, a rock, a rock which will be foundational to the church. *That* is some burden to bear. Simon Peter has a new job; he has gone from quiet fisherman minding his own business and trying to get by in life to church leader, to one whom God has entrusted with the truth of the gospel, and expects him to carry into the world. It is the first time Jesus claimed him as a servant, and it would not be the last. And it was all because of his step of faith - to recognize and accept for himself the truth about Jesus.

That is what happens when we take hold of Christ. Things change. We like to think that being a Christian is a nice, comfortable, safe identity. But it's not- at least not if it is real. Humanity and God, and religion and faith, are not that much different than in Simon's day. Simon was the first person in history to make the claim 'you are the Messiah' because God blessed him with a revelation, an a-ha

moment about this person he thought he had known all along. And now, all these generations afterward it's still the same. We still have public opinion (Jesus is a good teacher, and a political hot potato.) And we still have what our mamma and papa taught us (about God and the 10 commandments and doing good to your neighbor). And we still live with the combined hopes and dreams of humanity.

But it is only in that ah-ha moment that moment of insight and revelation of God that Christ really becomes ours. That we know, really know, who he is and take it for our own truth. He is the One God has promised - who loves me, and saves me, and heals me. And we are claimed by him. Do you remember Paul's statement? "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17) We have a new name, and a new identity. We were 'Christians', now we are Christ's own - down to the depth of our souls.

And like Peter, we are changed and we are claimed. We have a new identity and with it we have a purpose and a mission. We were church members now we are the body of Christ. We were religious people now we are servants of God and part of God's building program - as Paul says, we are ambassadors for Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

It begins with the question "Who do you say I am?" It begins with the hope you seek, the answer you give, and the profession you embrace. And it is met by the One who blesses us with grace and names us his children and calls us his servants and empowers us to live for the one called the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. It is such profound statement, and such a powerful claim that it is the sole foundation of the church. It is grounding for our lives as followers of Christ and for our service in his name. As a church we need to make our claim, we need to answer that question, as individuals and as a congregation. "Who do you say I am?" Who is Jesus to you? And how does that shaped your life? As your new pastor, designated to help you find your call from God, that is the first question I will be exploring with each one of you. I look forward to your answer.

May God bless you as he blessed Peter.

Amen

Joys and Concerns

As you meet with God in prayer, please lift up the joys and concerns shared through the Trumpet Blast. God is eager to be your help and strength, to listen to you and meet your needs. Prayer is a gift we can always use.

Prayers of the People

Holy God, we praise you and thank you for your wondrous blessings to us. We thank you for the truth of your love and mercy and grace in Jesus Christ. And we thank you for the gift of your Spirit, who leads us to the knowledge of your truth and strengthens us to live in faith. God it is a great and profound privilege to be called as your children and servants, and so we come to you asking for your wisdom and power.

We pray, Gracious God, for your church and for this congregation. May we find the words to freely confess our faith in Christ and live according to our confession. Grant us continually fresh insights into your grace, a deepening trust in your guidance, a growing ability to serve your kingdoms goals.

We pray, Mighty God, for all who are leaders among us. Grant to our leaders the grace and faith to know you, and the strength and courage to establish your ways of justice and peace. And we pray for all peoples who long to see the promise of your reign be fulfilled in the world.

We pray, Merciful God, for all who turn to you this day. May they find peace and blessing as they recognize your presence with them. May those who mourn hear your comforting words and those who are ill know your healing touch. May those who are in need know your faithful provision, and those who feel forsaken feel your caring support. We especially remember our friends and families in their needs and we thank you for all blessings you have granted to us.

We praise you, Glorious God, for your presence with us, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Let us join together in the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us to say ~

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayer Response [Audio <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akY1i4GIWmU>]

Hear Our Prayer, O God, Hear our prayer, O God,
Incline Thine ear to us, And Grant us your peace.

Benediction

Go now into the world,

giving thanks to God
who had made it possible for us to share
in what he has promised his people
in the kingdom of ...his dear Son....(Col 1:12, 13b adj)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Postlude You'll Never Walk Alone
[Video - <https://youtu.be/rOtMU2RPXvw>]