

Shawnee Presbyterian Church
August 23, 2020
Mrs. Chera Wertz
“Who Am I?”

Psalm 124

A song of ascents. Of David.

¹ If the Lord had not been on our side—
let Israel say ² if the Lord had not been on our side
when people attacked us, ³ they would have swallowed us alive
when their anger flared against us; ⁴ the floods would have engulfed us,
the torrent would have swept over us, ⁵ the raging waters
would have swept us away. ⁶ Praise be to the Lord,
who has not let us be torn by their teeth. ⁷ We have escaped like a bird
from the fowler’s snare the snare has been broken and we have escaped.
⁸ Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth

Matthew 16:13-20

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades[b] will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah

Who Am I?

The life of toddler is fun, carefree, and exciting. Watching them explore the world can be so entertaining for adults. Have you ever attended at toddler’s birthday party? Such joy and excitement as their friends start to arrive. Beautifully wrapped presents for the birthday person in their hands. As they approach the birthday boy or girl, if you listen closely, you may hear things like; “Here is your present, we got you monster trucks”, or, “The dolly stroller is from me”. The presents have not been opened yet and the cat is out of the bag! Followed by parent comments such as, “You weren’t supposed to tell them”, or, “You ruined the surprise”. Toddlers are so much fun! Have you ever tried to tell a toddler a secret? One time I hid my husband’s birthday present and told my son not to tell Daddy. What do you think he did? As soon as my husband got home, he took him by the hand and led him to the exact spot it was hidden. We all have that one friend or family member that tells you if you want to keep this a secret don’t tell

me! Lets face it some people are just not good a keeping secrets. Ask a group of people to keep a secret, and you're looking for trouble. More than likely, someone will let it out. Especially if the secret is astonishing.

In the Gospel of Matthew this morning Jesus asks the disciples a question, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" Almost as if He was asking what's the word on the streets about me? They replied with several answers, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. I imagine at this time Jesus sat back and pondered what they were saying. He then asked the question, "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter was the only one that answered. Without hesitation he replied; "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Simon Peter received praises from Jesus because no one human had given him this answer, it was revealed to him by God. Jesus called him Peter and said you will be given the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Then he immediately ordered the disciple not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. Was Jesus telling the disciples to keep a secret? Or was He challenging them to go forth and tell the world? I bet some were bursting at the seams with this information. That's a pretty big secret to keep. Here is something to think about. What would you do? Would you alert the media? Now should be the time to call in the media. Now is the time to contact CNN & MSNBC & ABC & CBS & NBC. Let's get the word out. Let everybody know that the Messiah has come and is setting up his organization. But it's not time for press releases. But it's not time for photo ops. Far from it! Did you take notice of the ending of today's Gospel text? Here it is again -- Jesus "ordered the disciples that they should not tell anyone that he was the Messiah." Nobody means nobody.

Not a one. Mum's the word. Not a word of publicity. Keep the secret. Why is Jesus intent on keeping his messiahship a secret? Why not let it out? And now that He has admitted who He is, and the disciples all know it, does He really think this secret can be kept? Won't it travel from mouth to ear at the speed of novelty? The voices that ask, "Have you heard?" will multiply rapidly across the land. You'll never believe what I just heard, did you hear the latest? You are not going to believe what just happened. Jesus just confirmed He is the Messiah, but orders them not to tell? Let me say that again: Jesus confirms that He is the Messiah but orders them not to tell.

Something that always seems confusing is when Jesus tells people not to tell others who he is. That he is the messiah. Why not tell people who he is? Surely that would help with the building of the church. The problem is the different expectations of what the Messiah would do. What Jesus would do. The general expectation was that the Christ would come and reclaim Israel for the people. Reclaim it in terms of a military army coming and taking it by force. Or with political influence. We know now that Jesus hadn't become incarnate to do that. He was to reclaim the people of God by his death, burial and resurrection. If the rumor mill suggested that Jesus was the Messiah it would have invited even more misunderstanding on why Jesus was there. People had a hard enough time understanding what he said and did the miracles, the healing, befriending the friendless, and being with the least of these. Jesus wanted to keep it quiet for a little while longer to help with the mission, the mission of redeeming the entire world. Maybe the disciples did not understand Christ's mission fully enough to teach it. Maybe he wanted them to wait and see first hand how the redemption would take place. These men were not ready to be trusted with the tender things of the Lord. Jesus knew it was not time for the disciples to teach the truths which would soon come to the infant body of believers called "the

church." In forbidding them to tell others Jesus was the Christ and in forbidding them to share the wonders of the transfiguration, Jesus was obviously constraining them until a future time when they would understand the significance of his life and death and revelation would be freely given to all who earnestly seek the Lord.

Things are much different now, we are charged to tell others who Christ is, who you say Jesus is. This question is not limited to purely what you say. It also includes your actions. It also includes how you interact with other people. Every part of your lives says something about who you think Jesus is.

Does your obedience to Jesus (or disobedience) suggest something about who you consider Jesus to be?

If this passage asks of us anything, it is to be reflecting to the world Jesus in all that we do and say, whether it's at work, or shopping, or driving a car or even just having a coffee at a coffee shop. We have the gift of time to know exactly what Jesus did. How atoning sacrifice so that we may come into relationship with God the Father. That the Kingdom of Heaven is now available to all people.

So...who do you say Jesus is? Is he a prophet to listen to? Is he a teacher to learn from? Is he a healer to ask for healing from? Is he a provider to give you the material things you desire? Is he a rebel that we need to imitate? Or is he just a name you use when you get angry?

The answer to the question "who do you say Jesus is" must be...

"He is the son of the living God. He is God and he so deeply desires to know us and to be given permission to transform us".

Can you say that? Will you say that? Who would you say He is? How would you answer when Jesus asks you, "Who Am I?" Amen!