

Jesus is the Christ Son of God

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Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In our Gospel reading for today, Jesus continues to lead His disciples into Gentile territory. This time to Caesarea Philippi, located southwest of Mount Hermon. Caesarea Philippi was a city that had been rebuilt by Philip the Tetrarch, son of Herod the Great. With its temples and shrines to various gods, He had renamed this city after himself. And it represented the wealth and power of the Roman Empire in that region.

And so, when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asks His disciples, ***"Who do people say that that Son of Man is?"*** (v.13) He wanted to know from His disciples, what others had to say about Him. He had displayed power from on high when He healed and fed many people. He had been declared to be the Son of God by several including His own disciples especially after He walked on the water. And yet, Jesus wanted His disciples to listen to what people were saying about Him.

They answered Him, ***"Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*** (v.14) All of these were highly regarded among the Jews, but then again even in this extremely Gentile area, at most Jesus was considered to be no more than a great prophet. Curious then as to what His disciples believed and were

saying about Him, Jesus asked them, ***“But who do you say that I am?”***(v.15)

This might be a good question for us as well. The Israelites had rejected Jesus’ ways. Philip the Tetrarch simply took pride in himself, boasted of his accomplishments and didn’t care enough to think much about Jesus. And most likely, those living in the region of Caesarea Philippi, would have simply placed their trust in themselves, their wealth and in the power of Rome. But what kind of public witness have we given to those around us?

Some might say that Jesus was a “good” teacher. Others might say that Jesus helped those in need. We might point out that Jesus was concerned about social issues like taking care of those who were hungry and provide healing for those who were sick or lame. And yet there are others around us that would say that He was a prophet. But Jesus is all of that and so much more...

And so, when Simon Peter said out loud, on behalf of himself and the other disciples, ***“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”*** (v.16) He got it right! Because the answer, given to him by grace through faith, recognized that Jesus is the anointed One who came to fulfill God’s promises. And Jesus Himself confirmed that it was so, when He said, ***“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”*** (v.17)

Jesus is much more than a carpenter’s stepson. He is the Christ. The Messiah, anointed by God the Father, to fulfill God’s promises and bring eternal salvation to us through His life, death, and resurrection. And He went on from that place to ultimately take all our sins that coming out of

selfish pride and false worship, to die with them on the cross so that by His resurrection, we might give good witness to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, who brings forth new life in us.

It's this confession, revealed to us by grace through faith, that is the rock upon which Jesus Christ builds His church. Notice I didn't say "The Church" or "Our Church." Jesus is the Lord of His Church. He is the Son of the Living God! And it's this good confession that keeps us away from the gates of hell. Not Peter's confession but rather the confession spoken by Peter along with the rest of the disciples as well as every believing Christian. And it's Jesus' Spirit that overcomes many great obstacles within us and around us so that we might be brought into and kept in this faith so that our good confession, together as His Church, might be shared with those around us.

You know, the city of Caesarea Philippi must have been remarkable during its time. But when you think of all the great building projects over time, what comes to your mind? There are many building projects in this world that have withstood the test of time. You might think of the Pyramids in Egypt. You might think of the Great Wall of China, built in the 15th and 16th centuries that is over 4,000 miles long. You might think of the Taj Mahal that took over 20,000 workers and 22 years for the whole thing to be completed. At one time, Phillip the Tetrarch's father, Herod the Great, rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem which was later destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. It took 80 years to build and must've been beautiful. Or maybe you might think of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome that took 109 years to finish.

But there is one building project that is much, much greater than any of these. It's been under construction for thousands of years and is still not finished. It isn't made of steel, bricks, concrete, or windows because it's being made to stand forever. It's the Lord's church...made of living stones of believers - like you and I - who by grace through faith, have been called to be part of His Church forever.

His Church isn't about wealth and power, but rather the key to it...is the love and forgiveness that comes to us from our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the key that He gives to His Church that opens the door of heaven. So that His Church in Heaven and on Earth might make a good confession together, be at peace with God, and live with Him, both now and always.

In Jesus' name. Amen.