

Who do you say that I am?

by Rev. Robert Griffith

In today's world we have so much stress put on our identity, who we are, and what our status is in society. How do you respond when someone asks who you are? The average person responds to that question by saying what they do for a living. We often define who we are by what we do. In our society who we are seems so important. When we stand in a line at the grocery store we can see on the magazines the who's who in the celebrity world. Many idealize sports stars, political leaders and movie stars. In our society we have become obsessed with titles. In fact, some have gone to great lengths to embellish their titles and glamorize who they really are.

Here are some that I found:

1. Colour Distribution Technician (Painter & Decorator)
2. Domestic Technician (Housewife)
3. Highway Environmental Hygienist (Street Sweeper)
4. Gastronomical Hygiene Technician (Dish Washer)
5. Media Distribution Officer (Paper Boy)
6. Sanitation Consultant (Toilet Cleaner)
7. Garbologist (Garbage man)

In Mark chapter 8 we read where Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi and He asked His disciples two questions. The first one was, *"Who do people say that I am?"* Let's look at that statement *"Who do people say that I am?"* Who is this Jesus? The disciples responded by saying some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. The Scriptures are full of descriptions of who this Messiah is. So I have four 'who' questions I want to explore today - the first being the question that Jesus asked His disciples: *"who do people say that I am"* Let's look and see who did people say that Jesus was and is.

1. Who do others say that Jesus is?

Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6)

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

The angel to Mary (Luke 1 :30-33)

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Nicodemus (John 3:1-2)

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

The disciples (Mark 4:41)

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Barclay notes that for us today Jesus brings us peace in our storms of sorrows, problems and in times of anxiety. Even our storms today obey Him."

The Samaritan women (John 4:19)

Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet.

Judas (Matthew 27:4)

"I have sinned ... for I have betrayed innocent blood."

God the Father (Matthew 17:5)

At the transfiguration a voice came from the clouds and said: "This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased, listen to Him".

Throughout Scriptures there are numerous descriptions of Jesus. The above passages are just a few of the many confessions in the Bible about who this Jesus is.

2. Who do you say that Jesus is?

This leads me to the second 'who' question. Jesus asks His disciples another question. It's similar to the first question, but yet completely different. Jesus had asked who do people say the Son of Man is, but next Jesus asked His disciples "*who do you say that I am?*" Jesus took a broad question and made it very personal. "*Who do YOU say that I am?*" He was not looking for what others had said, Jesus was now calling for an "I believe" statement.

Jesus is always looking for a real and personal response from us. He is not looking for what our parents believed about Him. He is not looking for what our Minister or Pastor believes about Him and He is not looking for what we have read about Him in the numerous books that are out there. Jesus wants to hear who we say that He is. We need to decide if we truly believe that Jesus is the Messiah, our Saviour and our redeemer or if He was merely a good man or a prophet as some people have claimed. Some have claimed that Jesus was just a fabrication, that He never existed. Some, like Gandhi said He was a good man and a good teacher. Some groups say He was just a prophet and not the Son of God. We need to decide if God sending His Son to this earth and dying on the Cross was necessary for us to have a relationship with God and forgiveness of sin. Do we believe that without Jesus there would be no hope? Jesus is asking again today, "*Who do you say that I am?*"

Peter responded to that question and said "*You are the Messiah.*" In other gospels we read, "*You are the Christ.*" Both terms mean the same. This is the answer that Jesus is looking for. This response means more than just salvation; it is a response that will bring a joy unspeakable. To say that Jesus is the Christ and believe it, means our lives can never be the same.

I have always remembered what Billy Graham said over and over again throughout his very long ministry. He said there were only three possible answers to this question. When asked who Jesus is, Billy used to say He is either a liar, a lunatic or the Lord of all creation. There are no other choices. So if you don't think Jesus is a liar or a lunatic, you only have one option ... and if you declare that Jesus is Lord of all creation, then everything in your life and your world must change to reflect the reality of that truth! If we say and believe that Jesus is the Christ then we must move aside from the throne of our own life and let Him rule as Lord. If He was the greatest offering of love that could be given to humanity, then we must embrace that love and live each day in the knowledge and reality of God's love and grace.

1 John 4:15-17 states:

“If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.”

3. Who do you say that Jesus is to others?

The third ‘who’ question I want to ask you is this: *“who do you say that Jesus is to others?”* How do you answer someone if they ask what is different about you as a Christian? Are you able to put into words what Jesus means to you? It is the greatest opportunity you will ever have to share with someone else what Jesus has done for you. Some people find it really hard to share their faith with others, but I fear that’s because we complicate it. Certainly there are gifted evangelists who do it really well, but every single disciple of Christ has a story to tell and only *you* can tell *your* story. Nobody has the gift of telling your story of faith and hope better than you. It’s your story.

Often we think that we need to give some elaborate sermon of what Jesus has done for mankind and that’s why so many Christians shy away from sharing Jesus with others. If someone is asking you who Jesus is to you or what is different about you because of Jesus, most likely it’s because you have a relationship with them. Relationships give you the biggest open door to share. You have gained their trust. Furthermore, they are probably not looking for a huge theological answer. They are looking for your own words; they are looking for your personal response – your experience – your story.

Share what your life was like before Jesus; share how Jesus became apart of your life; and share how Jesus transforms your life. And guess what? The more you share the hope you have in Jesus Christ the more it will feel natural to you. It’s your story, so tell it! Napoleon once said about Jesus: *“I know men and Jesus Christ is more than a man.”* Sometimes a brief statement such as Napoleon’s can say everything that needs to be said.

4. Who do you say that Jesus is by your actions?

The last ‘who’ question I want to ask you is this: *“who do you say that Jesus is by your actions”*. People are watching us. So are we living lives that tell others who our Jesus is? Or are we living lives that leave people questioning and confused. Are we living our lives in Christ, though Christ and for Christ - out in the open for all to see or are we more like undercover agents for Jesus? God doesn’t need any undercover agents. He needs men and women and young people who are willing to live a life that exemplifies who Christ is. What kind of legacy are we leaving for our family, our friends and our colleagues?

Do people see Jesus in us when we are at a sporting event? How about at community events; or in our business dealings? Do people see Jesus when we are out for coffee or dinner; how about at the movies? Even more so, do people see Jesus in us at Church and in the way we treat each other? I think you get the point. Who do you say that Jesus is to you - by your actions, because actions always speak louder than words.

Let’s look at Ephesians 5:8-17 from The Message translation:

You groped your way through that murk once, but no longer. You’re out in the open now. The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around. Get on with it! The good, the right, the true – these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours. Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it. Don’t waste your time on useless work, mere busy work, the barren pursuits of Darkness. Expose these things for the sham they are.

It's a scandal when people waste their lives on things they must do in the darkness where no one will see. Rip the cover off those frauds and see how attractive they look in the light of Christ. Wake up from your sleep. Climb out of your coffins; Christ will show you the light! So watch your step. Use your head. Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times! Don't live carelessly, unthinkingly. Make sure you understand what the master wants.

Who do you say that Jesus is to you with your actions?

So in conclusion I just want to reiterate those four 'who' questions I asked today and I pray that they will remain with us as we ponder this more throughout the week:

1. Who do others say that Jesus was and is?
2. Who do you say that Jesus is"?
3. Who do you say that Jesus is to others?
4. Who do you say Jesus is by your actions?"

Let me finish with this quote from William Barclay:

Our knowledge of Jesus must never be second hand. We might know every verdict ever passed on Jesus; we might know every Christology that the mind of man had ever thought out; we might be able to give a competent summary of the teaching about Jesus of every great thinker and theologian – and still, we may not even be a Christian. Christianity never consists in knowing about Jesus; it only consists in knowing Jesus personally. Jesus Christ demands a personal verdict. He did not ask only Peter, He asks every one of us again today: "You – what do you think of Me? Who do you think and say that I am?"

Let's pray: *Lord Jesus, come, by Your Holy Spirit, and manifest Your real presence in our midst right now. Come and open the eyes of our heart to behold You in all Your glory. Give us the courage to draw near to You so You might draw near to us. Give us the humility to step aside and let You be Lord of our lives and Lord of this Church again.*

Forgive us for letting the focus of Church shift away from You and Your mission in the world to so many other things which are powerless to transform lives and bring redemption to this broken world. It really is all about You, Lord Jesus. Reminds us of that every day.

I pray that each and every one of us will be able to give an account of the hope that is within us. I pray they we will all be able to clearly say with our mouths and boldly show with our lives that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the way, the truth and the life ... and that You are our Saviour, our redeemer and our friend. In Your matchless name and by Your authority I pray, Amen.