

## **Who Do You Say I Am? – Matthew 16:13-17**

Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis

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### **I. WHO DO YOU SAY THAT YOU ARE?**

Have you ever asked yourself the question, “Who am I?” Did you come up with a good answer? Who do you say that you are when someone wants to get to know you? If someone asked you the question, “Who are you?” and you had only one minute to answer, what would you tell them? What would be the core truths about yourself that you would share? Or you could think of it this way: What would people write about you in your obituary if it were written today?

But let’s go even a bit deeper, because obituaries and what you would tell another person about yourself, tend to leave out some very important details. They tend to leave out the bad stuff, don’t they? Usually our failures, our weaknesses, our dark side, and anything else of a negative nature are conspicuously missing from obituaries or from how we describe ourselves to others as we get to know them. When someone asks you to tell them a little bit about yourself, have you ever included details like, “Oh yeah, and I yell at my wife a lot, I really struggle with lying, and I have an anger issue?” Somehow we don’t usually volunteer that kind of information do we, but instead we only share the good things about us and the positive sides of who we are.

But I want you to pause this morning for a few moments and think how you would answer the question, “Who am I right now?” And as you answer that I want you to include both the good and the bad, because we all have some of both. Think of a few short phrases that would accurately describe the core truths of who you are right now, including what your passions and interests and strengths are, AND what your weaknesses and struggles and challenges are. You can do it in your head if you’d like; but better yet, write it down on the back of your bulletin or make a new memo in your phone. I’m going to give you a minute or two to do this and then we’ll continue on. Who are you right now? Ready, set, go!

**ALLOW A MINUTE OR TWO OF SILENCE AND THEN CONTINUE.**

Now, who wants to be first to share what they wrote? Just kidding! I wouldn't be that cruel! But I hope you have a good picture in your mind of who you are right now. You'll need it as we move through the message today.

For those of you that have been here the last few weeks, you know that we've been studying a profound prophecy that was given through the Jewish priest, Zacharias, in Luke chapter 1. This prophecy gave us a beautiful picture of God's grand and merciful plan for rescuing and saving people who were in slavery and living in darkness. It also shared with us how God would use the miraculous son of Zacharias, John the Baptist, to prepare the way for the One who would do the rescuing and visit us with the tender mercy of God.

Well, the child John the Baptist grew up into a man and at just the right time God called him to start preparing the way for the coming Rescuer. He did this by calling people to repent of their sins and believe in the good news. Repentance and trust in God would prepare them for rescuing and for experiencing a salvation that would come by forgiveness of sins. We defined repentance last week as: ***recognizing that what you did was wrong, taking full responsibility for it, and deciding you want to act differently in the future.*** And as John was preaching this message of repentance and trust, people started wondering who he was. Who was this strange man living in the wilderness, dressed in camel skins, eating wild locusts and honey, and calling people to repentance for the forgiveness of sins? People began asking John, "Who are you? Who do you say that you are?" ...the same question we've been asking ourselves this morning.

In John chapter 1, verses 19 to 23, we get the account of how this came about and what John's answer was. We read:

***19 This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."***

John boiled down who he was and his purpose in life in one short sentence. He was on a mission from God to prepare the way for the Rescuer, the Lord, in fulfillment of prophecies given hundreds of years earlier through prophets like Isaiah and Malachi. While there was doubtless much more we could learn about John and his personality and his strengths and weaknesses if we could sit down and have a conversation with him, he boiled right down to the most important thing about himself and his purpose in life. Can you do the same today? Do you sense a purpose or a call on your life, or are you just putting one foot in front of the other and trying to make it through another day? Are you just being swept along in the river of humanity, following the course of the world, doing what everyone else is doing with very little sense of purpose or direction?

## II. WHO DO YOU SAY THAT JESUS IS?

Well, I want to ask you another question on this resurrection Sunday that's even more important than your definition or description of who you are right now. It's the same question that was asked to a very famous person who spent lots and lots of time with Jesus Christ, listening to his teaching, asking him questions, and watching him live out his day-to-day life and perform miracle after miracle. This famous person who got to spend several years living and walking around with Jesus Christ, was the apostle Peter. And one day, as Peter was hanging out with Jesus, Jesus asked him and the other disciples a big question. We see how this played out in Matthew 16, verses 13 through 17. I'll read through verses 13 through 15 to get us to the big question:

***13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"***

From the way the disciples answered his first question, it was clear that people were saying all kinds of things about who they thought Jesus was. Some said John the Baptist, others Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. It sounds much like today, where if you were to conduct a random survey about who people think Jesus was or is, you would get many different answers. Some might say a good teacher; others an important prophet; others a good man who taught

us a lot of great things about moral living; others just a man whose name I use for cursing; others might say he's the Savior of the world.

But I'd like to ask you today the same question Jesus asked the disciples: "Who do you say that Jesus is." You've spent some time this morning thinking about who you are, but who do you say that Jesus is? How would you describe the core of who Jesus is in one or more short phrases? I'm going to give you another minute to think about and possibly write down a few short phrases describing who you say Jesus is. Ready, set, go!

ALLOW A MINUTE OF SILENCE AND THEN CONTINUE.

Well, what did you come up with? If you're courageous enough, share one of your phrases with us that describe who you say Jesus is?

ALLOW TIME FOR RESPONSES.

### **III. WHO IS JESUS ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE?**

So we've now heard a few ideas about who you say Jesus is this morning. Thanks for sharing. I'll tell you this is the most important question you need to answer in life, and I want to spend a few minutes now examining what the Bible says about who Jesus is. Let's start with the apostle Peter's answer to Jesus' question: "Who do you say that I am?" In verses 16 and 17 of Matthew chapter 16, we hear Peter's response to that question and we also find out whether Jesus himself agreed with Peter's answer.

***15 [Jesus] said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven..."***

It sounds like Peter came up with the right answer, didn't he? But Jesus makes it clear that Peter didn't figure this out by his own brain power and keen observation; instead, God the Father had revealed it to him. It's also important to note that Jesus himself agreed that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The title, "Christ," is the equivalent to the Old Testament word, "Messiah," both of

which mean, “The Anointed One.” Jesus is affirming here that he himself is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy that promised a coming King in the royal line of King David who would be the Great Deliverer “whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2-5). And not only that, but he’s actually the very Son of the living God!...the only One able to bring complete and perfect salvation to the human beings he himself created. Breathe that in for a moment.

The Bible as a whole tells us a lot more about who Jesus actually is and one of the best ways to get a good picture of who he is, is through the names and titles he’s given there. Jesus is given more than 50 names and titles in Scripture and I just want to highlight a few of them this morning to give us a brief and accurate picture of who Jesus actually is:

**Immanuel (“God with Us”) - *Matthew 1:21-23 (cf. Isaiah 7:14)***

21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

**The Word (Eternal Creator God) – *John 1:1-3, 14***

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being...14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

**The Savior – *Luke 2:11 / Matthew 1:21***

11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, was told ahead of time to name him Jesus, meaning “Jehovah is salvation,” because he would save his people from their sins.

**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace –  
*Isaiah 9:6***

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;  
And the government will rest on His shoulders;  
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

**The Lamb of God – *John 1:29 / Isaiah 53:5-7***

29 The next day [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming to him and said,  
"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed.  
6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all  
To fall on Him. 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He did not open His mouth;  
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,  
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,  
So He did not open His mouth.

**Redeemer – *Ephesians 1:7-8***

7 In [Jesus Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness  
of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished  
on us.

**Risen Lord – *1 Corinthians 15:3-8***

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that  
Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was  
buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,  
5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He  
appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom  
remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to

James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

**King of Kings and Lord of Lords – Revelation 17:14**

14 "These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

**Judge – Acts 10:40-43**

40 "God raised [Jesus] up on the third day and granted that He become visible, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. 42 "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. 43 "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

I'm going to stop there for now, though I'll share with you a few more names when I wrap up the message shortly. But I trust you can see that Jesus Christ is so much more than just a good man, a good teacher, or a gifted prophet. He's "God with Us"...the Son of the living God...the Savior...the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. He's the one who pays the ransom price to set people free from slavery to sin forever! He's the Risen Lord, King of Kings, and Judge of all people, living and dead. Is this who you say Jesus is today?

**IV. WHO DOES JESUS SAY YOU ARE?**

As we began today, I asked you to describe your perspective on who you are as a person. I'd like to ask you now to pick up or remember that description you developed of yourself, and now I want to focus on the question, "Who does Jesus say you are?" And I'll tell you that the answer to that question depends on your answer to who Jesus is to you personally. To you, is Jesus just a good man, a good teacher, or a gifted prophet? Or is he a lunatic; or a man whose name makes a good curse word; or a man who deceived countless people into thinking he was something he wasn't? Or to you, is Jesus a man whom you know is the Savior and the Son of God, but with whom you don't have a real, ongoing relationship? In

other words, you haven't personally invited him to be your Lord and Savior. Or you've said the words before but haven't believed them in your heart and begun to walk through life with him as his disciple?

If any of these statements describe who you say Jesus is right now, then I want to share with you how the Bible describes who you are right now. This is the description of all human beings who haven't repented of their sin and believed in and accepted for themselves the good news of Jesus Christ's death on the cross for our sins and his resurrection from the dead that we're celebrating today. This statement, found in Ephesians 2, verses 1 through 3, and then verse 12, described all of us at some point in our lives and is still an accurate description of the spiritual state of all those living life without Christ. Let me read it for you:

***Eph 2:1-3, 12***

***And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest...12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.***

This is the bleak description of all of us apart from Christ: dead in our sin; blindly following the course of the world that's being set by the devil; living for whatever pleasures and enticements and God-substitutes the world has to offer; unaware that we're under the constant wrath of God since he created us and we belong to him, but we're living as if he doesn't exist and we're giving him no glory or credit. And finally that bleak assessment of our spiritual condition without Christ: having no hope and without God in the world.

And the sad thing is that we can be in this condition and not even realize it. We might feel successful and be enjoying our life, even feeling like we're pretty good people compared to others. We might even be doing lots of good, religious things and staying away from many of the worst sins and bad habits and vices of the world.

But none of that changes the cold hard fact, that without Christ we're under God's wrath because of our sin, without hope and without God in the world. But I don't want to leave any of you there in that hopeless situation and neither does God. Don't believe me? Well listen to the words of 1 Timothy 2, verses 3 through 7:

***3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.***

God is offering every human being, no matter their past, their scars, their sins, a chance to be free forever and walk out of death into new life with him. Let's listen to what the Bible says about who you become when you follow his path to freedom...when you repent of your sin and trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord...when you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that he died for your sins on the cross and rose from the dead...when you choose to become his follower, his disciple.

There are more than 90 statements in Scripture that tell us who we become, our new identity, when we come to new life in Christ. Of course we don't have time to look at all 90 of them today, but I do want to share a few of them with you before we close. For those of you that aren't in relationship with Christ, this is who you can be when you choose to accept the free gift of salvation, forgiveness and new life that he's offering you right now. But for those of you that have trusted in Christ and are walking through life with him, this is who you are right now:

You are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

You are forgiven of your sin and have been declared righteous in God's sight (Romans 5:1; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

You are God's very own adopted child (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:5).

You are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10).

You are a saint, set apart for God (Ephesians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2)

You are a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20).

You have eternal life (John 3:16; 10:27).

You're no longer under the wrath of God (1 Thessalonians 5:9; John 3:36)

You've been set free from the power of sin; you're no longer a slave to it (Romans 6:1-14)...the stone has been rolled away from your grave and Jesus has called you out into freedom and new life like Lazarus.

You can approach God with boldness, freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12).

You have the Spirit of God and the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead living inside you (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; Ephesians 1:19-20).

You are loved (1 John 4:10; Colossians 3:12).

You have hope and are living an eternal life in relationship with the living God (Hebrews 6:19-20).

We could go on and on about the radical change that occurs within us when we repent, believe in Christ and begin following him. But let me sum up with this last verse from 1 Peter 1, verses 3 through 5:

***3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.***

## **V. DOES YOUR LIFE REFLECT WHAT YOU SAY YOU BELIEVE ABOUT WHO JESUS IS?**

So I hope you now have a better idea of who you are right now through what we've done today. We've seen two very different and contrasting pictures of who we are apart from Christ and who we are in Christ. And I hope you've gotten a glorious picture of who Jesus Christ, our resurrected Lord and Savior, actually is. And I'll tell you we've just begun to crack the surface of the amazing depths of who he is.

As we close today, I want to encourage you with a couple of final thoughts and application questions. First of all, I urge you, I plead with you: make sure that you're 100%, absolutely confident that you're in relationship with Jesus Christ. I've encountered numerous people in my life who say they believe in Jesus, but who show no fruit of his work in their lives and seem to have no interest in walking in a moment-by-moment relationship with him or with other Christ-followers. Don't ever forget that the demons also believe whole-heartedly in Jesus Christ, but they have no relationship with him and are actually his enemies.

Saving faith in Jesus Christ involves inviting him to be your personal Savior and the Lord of your everyday life...in other words, the One who's in charge now, guiding and directing how you live and the choices you make from here on out. True saving faith in Christ will result in a following of him and a vital, moment-by-moment relationship with him. You'll be talking with him regularly, praising him, thanking him, seeking his strength and wisdom, and being drawn into fellowship with other believers.

Jesus, in the Great Commission he gave to his followers in Matthew 28, verses 18 to 20, instructed them to make disciples of Christ, not converts. His instructions were to invite people into a relationship with him, wherein they would experience new life and forgiveness, start following him, and learn to live life according to his teachings. True disciples of Christ walk with him and experience a changed life as they follow him and learn to walk in the power of his Spirit. Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? Is that how you would describe your relationship with him today?

And for the large number of you here who can confidently describe yourself as a child of God and a disciple of Jesus Christ, I want to encourage you today to live out your new identity in him more and more. Believe him when he tells you over and over in his Word who you now are in him, and then walk out in the resurrection power and boldness he's given you through his Spirit. Be his ambassador everywhere you go to share the hope you have in him with others. Be faithful with the ministry of reconciliation he's entrusted to you, begging others with your lives and words: "Be reconciled to God through Christ." Be able to respond as confidently as John the Baptist did to the question, "Who do you say you are?"

The apostle Paul also had a very clear handle on who he was in Christ and what his mission and purpose in life was. Listen to how he describes it in Romans 1, verses 1 through 7:

***1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; 7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

Do you know as clearly as Paul who you are today? Are you in Christ and are you pursuing him and walking out the call he has on your life? If you're in Christ, who was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, you are beloved of God and called as saints! If you're not, please repent and trust in him today! He's so much more than you can even imagine and he's inviting you personally to come out of the grave and live this life and the rest of eternity in joyful relationship with him. He's the only source of real hope that doesn't disappoint in the world today!

Jesus is the Bread of Life (John 6:35). He's the Good Shepherd (John 10:11). He's the Light of the World (John 8:12). He's the One who invites everyone who will receive him, believing in his name, to become children of God (John 1:12). He's the One Door to salvation by the forgiveness of your sins (John 10:9). He's the One Way to be restored to relationship with God the Father (John 14:6). ***"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."*** (Acts 4:12) He's the author and perfecter of our faith. Let's fix our eyes on him ***"...who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*** (Hebrews 12:2).