

The Gospel: Matthew 16: 13-20

Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.

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

Celebrant: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Prayer:

May "...My sayings will drip like the dew, as raindrops upon the grass, and showers upon new growth. For I will proclaim the name of the Lord." In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Homily:

Let's take ourselves back to high-school geometry this morning, and I want you to think of a graph.

You have an X axis and a Y axis and you can plot dots within that space and join them with your map pencils to make a line. And if you have a lot of points that you can join together they can make a curved line.

These many points that form a curved line *down* toward the X axis is a *convergent* geometric series and a line that curves *up* away from the X axis is a *divergent* geometric series.

Now, I was not too good of a student and that is about all I remember about geometry, but I am good with remembering pictures, and when I think about all of these dots forming converging or diverging curves, I can think about how this is very similar to my life.

Each day a point on the graph and each week a trend of ups and downs all converging and diverging away from a center plane. Essentially, my life's story dancing around Christ's story as a constant, infinite story.

Most days my story and Christ's story meet. But some days, if I am honest, they also diverge. Thankfully, he is the infinite X axis of love, so that when our stories do diverge it is *his* they diverge from, so that by his absence as well as by his presence in my life I always know who he is and who I am and who I am not to be.

And the disciples were like this too. Although they are part of the story of Jesus, their stories are a part of Jesus' story but so is their humanity. And you see their stories move sometimes just ever so slightly from the X axis of Jesus' story.

We often make the mistake of thinking that for all the time the disciples spent with Jesus, they would know Jesus better than us. They would know at the very basic who he was, and that every day their story would be the same as his.

But we find in the Gospel reading this morning, that they can be just as confused about what story Jesus is telling with his life as we are sometimes.

Jesus asks the disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

And they say, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

His presence physically in front of them, yet an absence of him on their tongues. A little point with their colored map pencil just a little away from the X axis.

So, when on a given day when we plotted on our graph that our story may have diverged a little from Christ’s, it is not something to be ashamed of, just look at the disciples.

“*They say*” all of them, eager to give the theological answer, the spiritual answer, the knowledgeable answer, but none say the real answer, the reality of Christ as the Son of Man.

And Jesus doesn’t chastise them, he just asks them to look again at him, but from a different angle.

So, Jesus clarified and asked, “*But who do you say that I am?*” and there in the quiet of the moment Simon Peter answers, “*You are...*”

Imagine the joy of Jesus here, in this “You got it!” moment. Imagine the huge smile on his face at the true answer from the heart of Peter.

This is the joy of a teacher, seeing the mathematics click to their student.

Jesus has often been among his disciples, sitting in the same room, sharing the same table and bread and fish, yet at times his story and their story were not always the same.

But for Jesus, he sees us not at the individual point away from him but the full infinite series that shows how our story is dancing around his. He sees, what we don’t fully see, that we are between where we have been and where we are headed.

And if we could learn that too, then we would know joy of Christ’s words to us, “You are the Son [and Daughter] of the Living God” –you see it!

You see that here you are, in your life and YOU have “the keys to the kingdom of heaven” right in your hands. Eternity is yours to dance with and around.

Most days, we don’t think that. But we should.

We have the story of Jesus in our hearts. We have it in us to be Christs to each other. To live as if this truly were “the kingdom of heaven”.

We have it in us to work miracles of love and healing as well as to have them worked upon us. We have it in us to bless and forgive, to share each

other's pain and to rejoice with each other's measure of joy as if it were our own.

We have God's mercy, and that means that our stories have already converged for good and for all, and his story will come true in us at last.

It is my belief that all God wants from us is to speak more often with our hearts, just like Peter.

Don't overthink it. Don't try to be eager to give the theological answer, the spiritual answer, or the knowledgeable answer. What God wants is the answer of your heart.

He wants you to speak with your heart and bear witness to it, like Peter, even when you are the only one answering.

Because your heart speaking aloud are the only words that you have, the only place to live from and by and toward, and the only place where God's voice, his true word, is speaking its holy story to each of us.

And when we finally speak from our hearts, then Jesus will smile as we dance through life with him.