**Who Do You Say That I AM?** Sept 15, 2024

( Proverbs 1:20-33; James 3:1-12; Mk 8:27-38)

* I had originally planned for us to have a guest preacher this morning – a dear friend from Montreal who was coming for a visit, but because of sickness, he did not come but will be coming later this fall.
* Readings very interesting & also very appropriate for where I am at this morning.
* Me – because I have been doing a lot of soul searching over the summer about you, and even moreso about me.
* If I am called by God to minister to you, how effective is that ministry?
* What about you? Are you growing in Christ or are you making a difference in someone else’s life?
* What about me? Am I growing in Christ or am I making a difference in your life?
* We begin in Proverbs where we are presented with a choice.
* “***For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease without fear or harm.***” (Prov 1:32-33)

2

* This is really an echo of what we read in Deuteronomy: “***This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God. . . .***

***For the Lord is your life.***” (Deut 31:19-20)

* In the backdrop of making this profound choice to choose life, I am reminded in a very serious and somber way of my responsibility in this matter.
* In James (that Christopher just read) I am reminded:
* “***Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.***” (James 3:1)
* Where you are in your faith is really a measurement, or an assessment, of my teaching and whether or not I have been successful in helping you have and grow in a relationship with Jesus.
* And if you are not being nurtured or growing in a relationship with Jesus, then I indeed deserve to be judged more

3

strictly.

* What is my job? It is interesting that the Scriptures actually provide a job description for me or for that matter anyone who claims to be a teacher of the gospel.
* It is contained in St Paul’s 2nd letter to Timothy.
* First there is a foundational statement that goes like this: “***All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.***” (2 Timothy 3:16)
* Then what follows is my job description: “***In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction****.*” (2 Tim 4:1-2)
* *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction*.

4

* These instructions that Paul was giving to Timothy carry deep meaning.
* For example, do you know what it means by being prepared in season and out of season?
* ‘*In season*’ means that you probably agree with me and like what I am saying.
* While ‘*out of season*’ means just the opposite.
* You may disagree and even be greatly offended by what I am saying.
* The point is that, if I am following my job description and presenting the gospel to you, and you are offended, then it is not me who is offending you but rather it is the Word of God that offends you.
* Just because something is ‘*out of season*’ is not justification to not address it.
* For example if I was assigned to teach on Romans 1, a passage that teaches very clearly about homosexuality, and I chose not to because it may offend someone, then that would be disobedience and defiance on my part.
* I never have to try to excuse what the bible says, nor do I ever embellish it.

5

* The bible is the Word of God and as such it speaks for itself.
* In **Romans 1:16** St Paul says: “***I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.***”
* That also has to be my belief and my understanding if I am to teach and preach according to God’s calling.
* All that I’ve said so far this morning leads directly to our gospel reading from Mark.
* Jesus asks his disciples first “**Who do people say I am?**” (Mk 8:27)
* And then following several responses (John the B, Elijah, or one of the prophets), then Jesus got down to the real heart of the matter.
* To his disciples he said: “***But what about you? he asked.*** “***Who do you say I am?***” (Mk 8:29)
* Jesus might have been ‘*out of season*’ in confronting his disciples in this way, but it was such an important question, that needed to be asked.
* It is no different for us

6

* That question lays before us and we need to answer it.
* I’m afraid that too often I have been reluctant, or afraid, of being out of season and consequently have not always confronted you with the most important question you will ever ask – “Who is Jesus in our lives?”
* One possibility is that we may really want to say that Jesus is our Lord and Saviour, but in our heart, we have doubts.
* First and foremost, we need to be honest with ourselves because God already knows what is in our hearts.
* But no matter where we may be at in answering this question, it always begins with a confession with our mouths.
* ***If you confess with mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.***” (Rom 10:9-10)
* I mentioned at the beginning that I have been doing a lot of soul searching over the

7

summer and I have come to realize that we, and I am very much a part of that we, don’t seem to be growing.

* For example, at our recent vestry meeting, it deteriorated to a situation where it was one side wanting to outvote another side.
* That may be a model that is used by many churches where there is a primary interest in power and control, but it is not a model that interests me.
* I am in my 80th year and my interest is being a part of a worshipping community that loves the Lord Jesus and who is growing deeper in that relationship.
* It is a place where there is real joy – a joy that is unmistakable and contagious.
* I believe I made a mistake several months ago when I suggested that at the Peace, we wish each other this joy.
* While that may be a great thing to wish upon another person, I don’t believe that wishing it on another makes it happen.
* Such joy is a real joy that can only come from our relationship with Jesus. It is either there or it is not.
* As we come back to Church following the

8

summer, I believe we need a **RESET**.

* So, as your pastor, I believe I owe it to

you to challenge you with the same question Jesus challenged His disciples with.

Jesus said: “**But what about you, who do you say I am?”**

If you can say that Jesus is your Lord and Saviour, I invite you to come forward and I will seal that fact with a holy anointing.