

Matt. 16:13-16 The True Confession

Today, I would like to speak about the most important question we will ever answer. Who do we say Jesus Christ is? We can be wrong on a lot of things in this life, but we cannot be wrong on Who Jesus is. Our life, our happiness, our future, how we understand the world in which we live . . . EVERYTHING depends on how we answer the question: Who is Jesus? With this in mind, I have 2 truths as we consider a True Confession. Before moving to the confession itself, let's consider for a few minutes what a true confession is NOT.

Let's think about our context for a moment. Jesus and his disciples just left some religious leaders who wanted to test him. They wanted to know who He really was. In their minds, if he were the Messiah, then he should give a sign. Well, he had given them LOTS of signs. There were healings, casting out of demons, raising the dead to life, feeding thousands of people, etc. And these religious leaders refused to see these signs, so Jesus only referred them to the sign of Jonah. And he spoke to them in parables (16:1-4). And then, he travels with his disciples he asks them, "*Who do the people say the Son of Man is?*" Let's notice the responses.

First, some say he is John the Baptist. John was a great preacher and a prophet, who had been recently killed. So, many thought he was John, risen from the dead. Others say he is Elijah, who also had come back to life. After all, Malachi prophesied (4:5-6) that God would send Elijah before the "**great and terrible day of the Lord.**" (We know this to be John the Baptist because Jesus identifies him as this Elijah to come. See Matt. 11:14). Still others say he is "Jeremiah or one of the Prophets." In saying this, the people would have remembered the words of Moses from Deut. 18:15: "**God will raise up a prophet like me. Him, you must listen to.**" There was a general expectation that the Messiah would be this special prophet.

Well, all of these answers were sincere confessions. However, they were all wrong. So, let me ask: "*Who do people say that Jesus is today?*" Here are some examples. My Agnostic Friend. This person believes there is a God and even believes there may have been a historical Jesus, but certainly doesn't believe Jesus was God in the flesh, or that He is the true way to Heaven. In fact, this person probably thinks that Jesus was some type of a lunatic or crazy person for being so religious. My Muslim friend – He confesses that Jesus is the greatest prophet outside of Mohamed and even believes Jesus did not sin. He believes he is the greatest teacher in the history of the world outside of Mohamed.

Well Intentioned Friend – This lady believes He is the Son of God, but only in the flesh. In other words, she believes him to a holy man, a rabbi, a good teacher, but not the very God incarnate. And, we should follow Jesus as long as he suits us. New Age Co-Worker. This person spiritualizes everything and believes Jesus is one of the world's greatest spiritual gurus. All Inclusive Family Member. These folks are the ones you talk with at family reunions. They think you are not a very tolerant person, but they don't tell you face to face because, after all, you are a family member who is obviously sincere. And, after all, ALL ROADS DO LEAD TO HEAVEN. These (and others) are all confessions, and they are well-intentioned, at least in the person's mind. But, they are all wrong.

Let me ask a question about confessions. "*Can someone have a sincere confession of Christ and still be in error?*" Or, what about a sincere confession that is partly correct? Consider these

examples. Russian (Greek) Orthodox Believer. This person believes the truth about Christ and can sign all the true Orthodox Church Confessions. This person only goes to church on Easter and Christmas. However, he would fight you to the death if you told him he weren't a Christian. My Good Ole Boy Neighbor. This is, honestly one of the nicest people you know, and you would trust your life with him. He calls himself a Christian and will help you with any job requiring tools or manual labor. You can always borrow his truck. What about the Faithful Church Member. This person always attends church meetings. Religion is his life. He certainly confesses Christ. After all, his great, great grandfather was a deacon, his grandfather was a deacon. He is a deacon. However, when you talk to him about the basics of the Gospel, he just doesn't get it. And, you wonder . . .

I am sure all of us know one of these folks, and they all confess Jesus in one way or another. But, what is needed in these confessions? What is the correct confession and how do we know that it is real? Jesus said to Peter, "Who do YOU (all the disciples) say that I am?" and Peter says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." v. 16. Here, I want to highlight two truths about from this text about a true confession: 1) A true confessions knows why Jesus came; 2) A true confessions knows who Jesus truly is.

1. A True Confession Understands Why Jesus came. Peter says, "**You are the Christ.**" In this confession, Peter (although in a limited sense) understood the purpose of Jesus' coming. He knew what Jesus came to do. By calling Him the Christ, he was recognizing that Jesus was the chosen one of God, the one of whom Matthew says, "**They shall call his name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins**" (Matt. 1:21). The title Christ (Christos in the Greek) is taken from the verb *chrío* which means to anoint. In the OT the noun is used 38 times, always in reference to a person, usually referring to a king or priest. In other words, the king was anointed (chosen) by God with the special task of leading His people. Or, the priest was anointed (chosen) by God with the task of carrying out the special religious duties. So, Peter knew that Jesus came as the "anointed or chosen one" the Messiah, the one with a special **work** to do.

A good illustration is the example of David. God told the prophet, Samuel (1 Sam 16:1) "**Fill your horn with oil, and go: I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.**" Then in 16:13, "**Arise, anoint him; for this is the one! Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.**" He was chosen for one main purpose: To be the God-given King of Israel.

In the same kind of way, Christ was anointed with a special work. He came to save sinners. The Apostle Paul said in **1 Tim. 1:15** "**This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.**" This was His unique, special, work!

And, who are we? We are sinners. We have inherited the sin nature of our first parents. We are sinful to our core. We are corrupt, and bent toward sin. We cannot fully obey God and make ourselves righteous enough! I love the picture of Eustace in the *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Because of his sin and his sinful choices, Aslan turns him into a fire breathing dragon. And there is one scene in the movie, as he realizes what he has done, he tries to scratch himself, as if to change his skin. But, he cannot! This is us. From the inside out, we are sinners. And we

cannot change this fact. Just last night I read from Lev. 26. Moses had just given God's laws to the people. And he says, obey them and it will go well with you. But, as we look at their history, what do they do? They disobey in every generation, until eventually the curses of the law fall upon them and they lose their temple, their walls, their city, their land. Later they will come back and rebuild. But, it happens again. We are the same. We commit the same sins over and over. And unless God sends a savior, we cannot be saved.

This is why Jesus came. Acts 4:12 says: **"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."** Christ obeyed every command of God, not only with word and deed, but with motive. Theologians often call this the "active" obedience of Christ. Upon the cross, when Jesus cried out on the cross, *"It is finished"* he meant, *"I have obeyed the law perfectly. I have met the requirements of obedience that Adam and his offspring, and Israel, and all my people, did not meet."* In his death on the cross, Jesus met EVERY requirement of God as an acceptable sacrifice. In his sacrifice, he bore our sins. Christ became sin for us! God punished Jesus in my place.

And that's not all! He also took the wrath and judgment of God upon himself (for my sins and those who come to him). This is often called his "passive" obedience. He took away the enmity between a holy God and his people! No more wrath! And this is why he came. This is the Gospel. This is what we believe. This is what we preach. This is what we hold on to every day. My favorite verse from Isaiah is 53:10: **"It pleased the Father to bruise the Son."** Jesus could have called ten thousand angels to save him from that hour. But, He did not! Instead, he was passive as He received ALL the wrath our sins deserve.

So, what does this mean for you, for me, for us, who have believed in Him? Col. 2:13-14: says **"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting or requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."** This means our sins were laid upon Him. The requirements of the law that we have broken since birth were taken out of the way, and they were nailed to the cross. No more guilt! I remember the day I realized this and received Christ. What a day!

What does it mean for those who are outside of Christ? Jesus told Nicodemus: **"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him"** (John 3:36). If anyone is here today and has never embraced Christ, God is angry with you! No position can be any worse! Looking back, it is hard to comprehend the reality that the God of the universe is angry with me. Look to Christ today! Ask God to turn your heart that it may be turned. Trust in what He has done! Christ came to save sinners!

2. A True Confession Understands Who Jesus is. Peter not only knew what Jesus came to do (even if in a limited sense), but he knew who Jesus was. In v. 16 as Jesus asks the disciples who He is, Peter answers for them all and says, **"You are the Son of the living God."** At this point, Peter knew that Jesus wasn't merely a man. After seeing Jesus walk on water, he said, **"Truly, you are the Son of God."** The book of John records Peter making the same confession, **"You have the words of eternal life, and we have come to know that you are the Christ, the Son**

of the Living God.” Immediately after being called by Jesus, Nathaniel said, **“Rabbi, you are the son of God.”** Thomas, after touching the hands and feet of Jesus said, **“My Lord and my God.”** After witnessing the death of Christ the Centurion that guarded Jesus, confessed, **“Truly this was the Son of God!”**

Today, as we consider the work of Christ, his sinless life and his sacrificial death on the cross, we must understand that Jesus could not have done what he did if were not God in the flesh. Jesus had to be man as well as God in order to accomplish what he came to do. He had to be man in order to be like us. Someone like us (a man) had to obey God’s law perfectly. He had to come from the seed of the woman. He also had to be God. He had to be perfect, sinless, God. A mere man could not have received the wrath of God for us. And, after death, he rose again. So, when we are confessing Christ, we are saying, *“He came with a purpose, namely to completely save sinners,”* and when we say He is the Son of the living God, we are confessing *“Jesus is God in the flesh.”*

Listen to part of the Nicene Creed from 325 AD, one of the first universally accepted confessions. *I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.*

Today, as Christians, we stand with Christians of all time upon this confession. And as we will see in the next two weeks, this confession is necessary for the building of the Church!

If we are not to be tossed to and fro upon the waves of differing opinions and beliefs about the person of Christ, we must know who He is and what He came to do. As a pastor here at GBC, I want to do my best by God’s grace to help create an environment where the gospel displays the glory of God. And, in order to do this we must believe and understand this confession. Brothers and sisters, this is the **ONLY TRUE CONFESSION!**

When your good ole boy neighbor comes to you and says, “Jesus was a good man, and quotes John 3:16” . . . When your Muslim friend comes to you and says, “Jesus was a great prophet!” When your new age co-worker comes and says, “Jesus was a great spiritual man. But, there are many roads to heaven.” We must make clear our true confession. The apostle John, **“These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His name.”** We must be willing whenever necessary, to fly in the face of popular opinion and openly express a conviction that is contrary to what the world is saying.

Brothers and sisters, EVERY good thing that comes down from God to us depends on the person and work of the Son. This means, as a Church, we must make every effort to make sure this continues to be our confession. As elders, we must make this confession as Peter and the disciples did, and lead you accordingly. This means, as families . . . Fathers, Mothers, we make sure our kids understand this True Confession. We must! As Grandparents, make sure you grandchildren hear this confession and know this confession. As neighbors, we must pray to God for conviction and boldness, that our friends and neighbors hear our confession. We must! May God help us to do so!