

Who do you say Jesus is?

Luke 9:1-50

When Jesus came to earth and began His ministry, He claimed to be the Son of God but He did not simply go around saying, *"I am the Son of God."* He proved it by doing the things that only God could do. Lots of false messiahs had claimed to be the Christ but none of them could make good on their claim. Jesus claimed to be God's Son and He proved it by what He did.

That's why when John was in prison and he sent His disciples to ask, *"Are you the One or should we be looking for another?"* Jesus' reply to them was not a simple, *"Yes, I am the One."* Instead, He told John's disciples all of the things He was doing. The things He did were the fulfillment of everything in the Old Testament and answered the question: Who is Jesus?

As we come to the end of the second main section of Luke's Gospel (Luke 4:14-9:50), Luke's main objective is to answer the, *"Who is Jesus?"* question. It had been the consistent drum beat throughout this section. Jesus identified Himself, the demons knew it, some people understood it and He proved it by what He did.

We need to be able to answer these two questions: 1) Who is Jesus? 2) What does it mean to follow Him? These are the two most important questions you will ever answer in your life.

Your life will never make sense or have any purpose apart from knowing Jesus. Also, for you to be saved from your sin and from eternity in Hell and to spend eternity in Heaven you need to know Jesus. Luke tells us one more very important thing as he concludes this section of his gospel. He tells us what it means to follow Jesus.

I. Who is Jesus?

This is the most important question you will ever answer. Many of our college students are back this Sunday preparing to kick off the spring semester. Of all of the work you will do, the papers you will write, and the tests you will take the most important question you will ever answer is this: Who is Jesus?

No, this question will not be asked by a professor or in an exam or in a paper. It will be asked of you by Almighty God on the Day of Judgment. And just like Jesus disciples had the question asked of them it will be asked of you: *"Who do you say that I am?"*

There is no makeup work for this question. This is no time to turn in a late assignment. You must answer the question then. It will be too late to go back and study. Your grace period is right now so let's work through the text so you can learn.

A. Herod and the Crowd's answer (vv. 7-9, 18-19)

Herod and the crowd were confused about Jesus. You remember Herod. This was not Herod the Great but his son, Herod Antipas or Herod the Tetrarch. He had John beheaded for speaking out against him because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife. John the Baptist confronted Herod about this sin and other evil things he had done. So, Herod had him killed.

After John's death Jesus' ministry began to gain momentum. Herod thought his problems were over when he killed John but they were not. Now Jesus was out there and He was doing even greater things than John. So, Herod asked his advisors who they thought Jesus was and they said some thought he was Elijah raised from the dead and others one of the prophets of old. This was the same thing the disciples told Jesus in vv. 18-19.

Herod and the crowds were confused about Jesus identity. They were uncertain of who He was. They had heard about all He was doing but they could not connect the biblical dots.

If they had Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter they would have been blowing it up with what Jesus was doing: *"He preaches like John, heals the sick, casts out demons, and even raises the dead. Could He be the promised Messiah?"*

Herod's response was simply to try to see Him. The crowds responded by continuing to follow him because they wanted free food and free health care.

Even after all that Jesus said and did they did not understand He was the Son of God. The gospel seed had once again fallen on the hard soil of the path.

Many people today are like Herod and the crowds. They hear about all that Jesus has done but they cannot make sense of Jesus. They say, *"This all happened 2000 years ago how can it be real?"*

Although they see the changed lives of those who have trusted in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit overflowing in their lives, and they hear Christians talk about Jesus as if He is alive and that they know Him, they are still *uncertain* or *perplexed* about Jesus.

To be *perplexed* about Jesus is opposite of faith. Faith is to be *certain* of what is unseen but to be *perplexed* is to be *uncertain* about what is seen and unseen.

Listen carefully because I am not bashing uncertainty. It is okay to be uncertain about Jesus but it is not okay to remain uncertain. When you first hear about Jesus or hear the gospel message, it is okay to want to make sure these things are valid and true. However, once the facts are in, faith in who Jesus is needs to follow.

If you are here this morning and you are uncertain about Jesus, we are glad you are here. Let me encourage you to address your uncertainty better than Herod did. You need to investigate your uncertainty. You need to seek answers by reading the Bible, talking with Christians, and joining a Bible study in order to get the facts about Jesus and observe the lives of those who follow Him. Get to know who Jesus really is and what He has done for sinners.

Let me give you a warning. You see, Herod really did not want to know Jesus. Herod just wanted to make sure Jesus was not going to change his life or cost him anything politically.

But here is the bottom line, if you address your uncertainty you will find out the truth. You will learn that salvation is a free gift of sovereign grace but following Jesus is costly. Don't let the cost of following Jesus keep you from following Jesus.

I love what Dr. Steven Lawson says, *"To know Christ is life's greatest joy, to follow Him our greatest pursuit, to glorify Him our greatest goal."*

B. Peter's answer (vv. 18-20)

In v. 18, Jesus asked His disciples who the crowds said He was and they told him some say John the Baptist, some Elijah or one of the other prophets of old. Then Jesus made it personal and He asked them, *"But who do you say that I am?"*

Peter answered the question, *"The Christ of God."* Matthew 16:17, sheds more light on Peter's confession of faith. Matthew 16:17 says, *"And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.'"*

Now we understand how the gospel seed landed in the fertile soil of Peter's heart. God made Peter's heart receptive to the gospel seed. Only God can cause break up the hard soil and plant the gospel seed there. The soil of our hearts is not softened by words of men but by the word of God. God's word has power.

One more observation about Peter's confession. While Peter's confession was a good confession of faith, he did not know everything. We see his lack of understanding of Jesus in vv. 28-36.

You don't have to know everything about the Bible to have faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit does not just drop all biblical knowledge in our minds when we are trying to learn who Jesus is. You need to know that God is holy and you have sinned against Him and this sin means you are under the wrath of God and if you die in this condition you will spend eternity in Hell paying for your sin. The good news is, God came in Jesus to rescue you. He lived the life you should have lived and died the death you deserved on the cross to pay for your sin. He was buried and then rose from the dead on the third day. The proper response to what Jesus has done for you is to admit you are a sinner and turn from your sin and turn to Jesus by faith in Him as your Lord and Savior.

Friend, if you make this good confession, even after you are saved you will not know everything. It will take the rest of our lives to learn and understand that and it will be a joyous journey with Jesus to the end. So, keep learning and keep studying the word of God with other Christians.

So, if you are uncertain about who Jesus is, then make it your aim to settle the issue soon. Ask God to give you faith and understanding. Cry out for it for saving faith is a sovereign gift of God. Ask God to make your heart soft and receptive.

C. Who does Jesus say he is? (vv. 10-17, 21-22)

We hear Jesus affirm His testimony in vv. 21-22 and not only did He testify to who He was but He also told them His purpose in coming.

But this was not Jesus' only testimony of Himself. In vv. 10-17, we see that Jesus did things that only God could do. The text says there were 5000 men there. It is probably safe to say there were at least that many women and children too. There could have easily been over 10,000 people there that day and they had been following Jesus.

He had been healing the sick and preaching the gospel. As the day wore on, the disciples wanted to send the crowds into the surrounding villages to get food because they were in a *desolate* place. The word for *desolate place* is *wilderness (sound familiar)*.

But instead of sending them away, He told his disciples to provide food for them. They complained that they only had 5 loaves and 2 fish and that would hardly feed one family much less a crowd of 10,000.

Then Jesus showed them the glory of God by providing for them in the wilderness. He looked up to heaven and gave thanks and as Jesus gave out the food, He never ran out. There was more than enough to go around. Everyone ate and was satisfied and there were 12 baskets full of broken pieces of food left over.

Just like Yahweh fed the people of Israel in the wilderness, Jesus fed the people in the wilderness. This was Jesus' testimony of who He was.

Friend if you are serious about knowing who Jesus is consider that Jesus did more than just claim to be the Son of God. He proved it by what He did. He verified the truth by His actions. You can trust Him with your life. He will provide for you and you will be satisfied in Jesus.

D. The Father's answer (vv. 28-36)

The final testimony of who Jesus is, is that of God. Herod and the crowds were confused and Peter and the disciples didn't fully understand. Jesus had shown them who He was through the miracle of feeding the 5000 but now God the Father settles the issue.

Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him up on the mountain to pray. As they were there, the appearance of Jesus' faced changed and His clothes became dazzling white. The glory of God was revealed in Christ.

As the glory of God was being displayed in Jesus, Moses and Elijah showed up and had a conversation with Him. Verse 31 tells us their conversation was about what Jesus was about to go through, His coming crucifixion and resurrection (v. 22).

Then in v. 33, Peter thought it would be a good idea to build a tent to Moses, Elijah and Jesus. He still did not completely understand who Jesus was.

Then in v. 35, the voice of the Father comes out of the cloud to give clarity, *"This is my Son, my Chosen One, listen to him."*

Everything that happened on the mountain was clarifying to Peter, James, and John that Jesus is the One to whom they must listen. Jesus was not just another prophet, He was not Elijah come back from the dead, and He was not John the Baptist—*He was the Son of God, the Chosen One of God so listen to Him and no one else.*

Who is Jesus? He is the glory of God seen in Exodus 34:1-5, *"The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. ⁶ The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.'"*

So, who is Jesus? Jesus is the Chosen One of God, the Holy One of God and the very glory of God who took that glory to the cross and on that holy hill called Golgotha on the cross the Holy One spilled His blood on that altar to cleanse the people of God of their sin. Then three days later He rose from the dead and reversed the curse of death that was given in the Garden of Eden after the Fall.

When it comes to the question of: *Who is Jesus?* You need to ask yourself who are you listening to? You need to listen to Jesus; the Word of God incarnate.

Friend, do not rest until you have settled this question. My prayer is that if you have not settled this question that you would not be able to sleep tonight until you trust in the Chose One and listen to Him only.

II. What does it mean to follow Jesus?

A. It means you will be sent out by Jesus (vv. 1-6)

Jesus called His disciples together and gave them purpose and power. He sent them out to preach the gospel. He told them to depend on those whom they go to, to provide for their needs. Eat and drink what they give you.

Just a quick point of application. The sending out of those in gospel ministry is not free. Jesus sent out His disciples and those they served were supposed to provide for the gospel ministry.

Likewise, the needs of those who serve and the church require the members of the church to give and support those ministries.

We often talk about tithing and we use the figure 10%. You need to realize that 10% is a minimum when it comes to giving to the work of the gospel. If you are not tithing on a regular basis to support the work of the ministry in our local church let me encourage you to begin doing that this year. This is one of the ways we support gospel workers and support gospel ministries that come out of our church.

In v. 5, we see the disciples were to enter a village and preach the gospel. If the people rejected the gospel, then they were to shake the dust off their feet as a testimony against the people. This was a warning to the people to let them know that God was not pleased that they had rejected the gospel.

To be a disciple of Jesus is to be sent out by Jesus. When Jesus called His disciples to Himself, He equipped them and sent them out with the greatest purpose in life anyone could ever have—telling others about Jesus.

This past Monday night I enjoyed watching Alabama get beat by Clemson for the National Championship. But what I was really blessed by was their young quarterback who said that while he loves football and it an important part of his life, it is not his

life. He said following Jesus is the most important thing in his life. While he is playing football, he is sees himself as sent out by God to share Jesus.

But here is the sad truth, one day he will not be able to play football. One day football will not be his platform for telling others about Jesus. He will need to be sent out to share Christ in other ways.

We are like this young man. We are to share Christ doing what we are doing right now. But, we will not always do what we are doing. Our lives change and the Lord will take us to different places according to His plan. One year you live in the dorms and that is where you share. The next year you live off campus and that is where you share Christ. One year you may live in Ames and the next you live in Minneapolis and that is where God has sent you to share. The next year you may live on the other side of the world and that is where you are to share Christ. Eventually, if you live long enough, you may be in assisted living or a nursing home, like my mother and that will be the place where God sends you to share Jesus with others.

B. It means you will be satisfied in Jesus (vv. 10-17)

We have covered this text but I want to show you something about what to expect when you follow Jesus. Expect to be satisfied in Christ.

While the multiplication of the fish and the loaves is a miracle that points to who Jesus is what it teaches us is that if you follow Jesus you will be satisfied in Him. He is the only one that will bring true satisfaction to our lives and hearts.

The question is, do you follow Jesus? If you are not a follower of Jesus then you will never find satisfaction in this life because the bread of sin never satisfies.

What bread are you eating? Are you eating the bread of significance and recognition? Ames is full of the bread of education, accomplishment, and intellectualism. These things will never satisfy the deep longings of your heart. Ames is also filled with the bread of wealth, status, position, and power. This bread does not satisfy either.

Only Jesus, the Bread of Life will satisfy. So, if you are not feasting on Christ here is what you will do. You will go from one stale bread to another and never find nourishment or satisfaction for your soul. However, if you are feasting on Christ—expect to be satisfied.

C. It means your will carry your cross in the steps of Jesus (vv. 23-27)

In the spring of 1989, the Lord used v. 23 to change my life. I had drifted away from Jesus and lived for myself for so long that I did not know what it meant to deny myself and follow Jesus. Then I read Luke 9:23 and it was like a hammer between the eyes. I saw my hard heartedness and my selfishness. The Lord brought me to repentance and changed my life.

What I learned was it is a joy to carry my cross. I learned the truth of Hebrews 12:2, *“For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross and scorned its shame.”* It was a joy to deny myself and daily take up my cross.

The Apostle Paul reminds us what cross-bearing look like in his letter to the Galatian church. Galatians 2:20 says, *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* Galatians 5:24 says, *“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* Galatians 6:14 says, *“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”*

Finally, we see in vv. 24-27 that cross-bearing is not a call to discipleship but it is a call to salvation. It is what it means to be a Christian for there is no salvation without denying yourself and following Christ. Denying yourself and taking up your cross is what repentance is. It is what it means to be saved and what it means to be a disciple.

I have heard some well-meaning people say that they were saved at a very young and then when they got older they made Jesus Lord. That language is not in Scripture. There is no salvation apart from the Lordship of Jesus in your life.

To be a Christian is to bear the cross of Christ at conversion so let me say, count the cost of following Jesus. Salvation is a free sovereign gift of God but discipleship is costly. It may cost you your family, your friends, your position, your job, and in certain circumstances it may cost you your life. The latest report on the persecuted church says that 2018 was the deadliest year for the persecution and killing of Christians in all of history. If you are going to follow Jesus, expect to suffer.

D. It means there will be days when your faith in Jesus is weak (vv. 37-43)

Jesus’ frustration is with His disciples was with their weak faith. Matthew 17:18-20 sheds light on this text, *“And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.”* ¹⁹ *Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?”* ²⁰ *He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”*

Brothers and sisters there will be times when our faith is weak and small. It is in those moments we will need the word of God and the church to rebuke us and then encourage us to hold fast and trust Christ. It is in those moments that we need to be

reminded that it is not the strength of our faith but the strength of the object of our faith. Thank God for the One who holds us by such small faith in Him.

E. It means the gospel is the center of your life (vv. 44-45)

All of history had been leading up to Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross for sinners, and resurrection from the dead. Everything since the Fall of mankind in the Garden had been leading up to this event and the disciples still did not understand it.

Even today disciples misunderstand the importance of Jesus life, death, and resurrection. They want to make following Jesus about anything but the gospel. For them life as a disciple is living a moral life or perhaps it is about power and politics or perhaps it is being busy at church with programs or church growth or exciting, emotional worship services.

Brothers and sister following Jesus means making the gospel the center of your life and then spending the rest of your life learning how to live in light of the gospel. It means learning how to apply the person and work of Christ in all of life.

F. It means you must be humble to follow Jesus (vv. 46-48)

Jesus set a child in their midst because he wanted them to see that the ones who are most insignificant are the ones who are most dependent.

Jesus wanted His disciples to understand this important truth about being a disciple and especially understanding how it applies to ministry. Being a disciple and in ministry means being humbly dependent on Jesus. It is not about your significance in ministry, your position, your importance, your capabilities, your training, your education, your gifts or your talents. Following Jesus, in the words of John Calvin, is about three things: *First humility, second humility and third humility.*

It is those who are humbly dependent on the Lord who know the power and work of God in their lives. Humble dependence on Jesus is of greatest importance. If we are not humble then Jesus will humble us. When we think we are important, have lots to contribute, and are invaluable to the work of ministry, Jesus will humble us. So, expect to be humbled when you follow Jesus.

G. It means you will be rebuked by Jesus (vv. 49-50)

Finally, Jesus will rebuke us for many things but nothing made Jesus angrier than elitism. The Pharisees were elitists and Jesus, disciples were prone to it as well.

Elitism is spiritual pride at its height. In this text, we see that John, the beloved disciple, wanted permission to stop a person from doing ministry because he was not in their little group. Jesus quickly rebuked him.

Oh, brothers and sisters beware when we become elitists in ministry. When we think we are God's gift and have much to offer then we fall into the same pit as John and the disciples because we will want people to recognize us as the greatest. If you become an elitist as a disciple, expect to be harshly rebuked and humbled by Jesus.