



GROWTH GROUP LENT 2020

QUESTIONS JESUS ASKED:

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

WEEK 2 – MARCH 8, 2020 - MATTHEW 16:13-20

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

- 1) Can you remember the first time you made a decision to follow Jesus Christ? How old were you? Where were you? Or have you always just believed?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Jesus and his followers are in Caesarea Philippi, which was about twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee. This is the northernmost border of Israel. In a sense it is literally “on the boundary” between Israel and the world. It is perhaps appropriate that a conversation about the “church” happens at this boundary. As we look back on history we see how “the church” soon moved out of Jerusalem and disciples were made in Judea, Samaria and eventually the “ends of the earth.” (see Acts 1:8)

Peter’s confession in Caesarea Philippi comes with the temples of the Syrian god Baal, the Greek god Pan, and the Roman godhead of Caesar in the background. It is possible that Jesus has this discussion with his disciples, here, in order to contrast himself from the various world religions represented in this city.

It should be noted that Jesus spends a considerable amount of time with his disciples before he asks them to tell him who they think he is. This should remind us that people will not necessarily understand who Jesus is until they have spent time learning about him and worshipping him. Followers of Jesus need to be willing to spend time with others, who are trying to figure out who Jesus really is.

Peter speaks for the twelve and acknowledges that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. His use of the word “living” is a Jewish way of distinguishing him from the lifeless idols, and a reminder that God has life which He can impart to others, something that idols cannot do.



Jesus tells Peter that he will be foundational in the building of the church. We know from the book of Acts that it was Peter who opened the gates of the kingdom to the Jews at Pentecost, in Acts 2, and to the Gentiles, in Acts 10, where another smaller Pentecost like moment occurs. It is important to remember, though, that the church, belongs to Jesus, and not to Peter. The church's mission is to continually point people to Jesus so that they might find hope and salvation.

People sometimes wonder why Jesus tells the disciples not to tell other people that he was the Messiah. As you continue to read Matthew 16 the reason becomes more evident. Jesus is the Messiah, but he is not going to be the type of Messiah that people were expecting. If the disciples went out and preached about Jesus being the Christ, they would more than likely portray him in an incomplete way. The disciples would not fully understand who Jesus is until after his death and resurrection.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read Matthew 16:13-20

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" 14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter,[a] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades[b] will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be[c] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

- 2) Who do the people you know say Jesus is?
- 3) v. 16: Is Peter's answer (a) his own, (b) what others had told him, or (c) supernatural? Would you consider your understanding of Christ to be more theological or more experiential? How does this influence the way you tell someone else about Jesus?
- 4) vs. 17-19: What is the meaning behind Jesus' response to Peter's answer? What do you think Jesus' statement to Peter means to the modern-day believer?
- 5) Only when Peter affirms Jesus' identity does Jesus reveal Peter's identity. When you affirmed who Jesus was to you, do you feel as though Jesus changed your life at all?
- 6) What's the difference between "faith in Jesus" and "trust in Jesus?" Which would you say best describes your relationship with Christ?
- 7) v. 19: What do "binding" and "loosing" mean?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) In what ways can we affirm Jesus' lordship in our lives everyday?