

Revealing Jesus

10.7.18 (FP Service)

Mark Series

Message 36

Mark 8:27–30 (NIV)

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”

²⁸ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

²⁹ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”

³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Matthew 16:13–20 (NIV)

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, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be 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.

1. Around here we talk a lot about keeping Scripture in context.

A. When we keep Scripture in context, we minimize our voices and opinion and we open up ourselves to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

1. Almost all of us would agree that what we want is to hear from God.
2. We want to know the truth and allow that truth to change us.

B. The context of today's passage is a long story of faith and struggle.

1. Jesus miraculously fed thousands of people, and the disciples watched.
2. They watched Jesus heal the blind and deaf, signs that Isaiah said would follow the Messiah, and yet the disciples still watched.
3. They watched as regular, ordinary people, professed Jesus as their Lord, Savior, and Messiah and yet they still hadn't been willing to say aloud who they believed Jesus was.

C. In today's passage, Jesus finally demands an answer to the question: Who is Jesus to you?

1. The question that defines our lives and our eternities is the question, "Who is Jesus?"
2. And the answer isn't something we can fake.
3. It isn't enough to answer correctly, but we must sincerely believe that Jesus IS the Son of God.

D. There will come a day when every person who ever lives must answer this question.

1. There will come a day when we will be judged by this answer.
2. This morning, we will look at the extraordinary beauty of this passage and what Jesus was doing.
3. We are going to be challenged to reveal Jesus in the darkest of places.

2. The question takes place in Caesarea Philippi. (First Picture)

A. I don't believe Jesus did things by coincidence.

1. He was purposeful on timing and places.
2. Jesus utilized the surroundings of Caerea Philipp as the backdrop to the question He is asking.
3. But Caesarea Philippi is a crazy place for Jesus to ask this question.
4. This is not a holy place but a wicked place.
5. Jesus chose a wicked and dark place to reveal Himself to the world.
 - a. This is Jesus' way.
 - b. He takes common things, common people, and common places and makes them holy.
 - c. Jesus takes the nastiest and the vilest and reveals himself there.

Let's talk about the setting for a moment.

B. Caesarea Philippi is an ancient, political city. (**Second Slide**)

1. Caesarea Philippi is at the base of a mountain, and the journey Jesus took his disciples started at sea level and ended up thousands of feet above sea level.
2. The Ancient Greeks built the early city and dedicated a shrine to the God "Pan and the Nymphs". (**Slide of Pan**)
3. During the early days of the Roman Empire, Philip named it Caesarea Philippi, to honor Caesar and himself.

C. This is a weird setting for a proclamation of who Jesus is.

1. You have a city dedicated to the god "Pan" with a great marble temple in his honor.

a. The caves around the countryside were all dedicated to Pan.

1. Pan was half-man and half-goat.
2. He was the god of panic and lustful sex.
3. His worship often led to crazed orgies, wild dancing, and more.

b. It was from the mouth of these caves that the source of the Jordan river could be found, a river named Paneas, and inside the cave was a pagan shrine.

c. This is the same water that John the Baptist baptized Jesus in, a river that got its start in an area dedicated to a mythical god.

2. IF this wasn't bad enough, this area was also dedicated to Caesar.

a. Caesar demanded allegiance, and one of his royal titles was "king of kings" and "lord of lords".

b. This was Caesar's territory, this was Pan's territory, this was enemy territory!

3. **It was on the territory of the enemy that Jesus asked His disciples who they believed Jesus was.**

a. Your greatest profession of faith may not happen in a comfortable church building.

b. Your greatest profession of faith may happen in your school, in your marriage, in your workplace.

c. I believe **Our greatest professions of faith happen when we are on enemy territory!**

3. The Question: Who do people say that I am?

A. The first question doesn't require much effort.

1. The disciples had heard all of the gossip.

2. Some thought Jesus was John the Baptist.
3. Others thought bigger and said Jesus was Elijah returning to usher in the Kingdom of God.
4. Many others thought Jesus was just a teacher:
 - a. Just a carpenter's son.
 - b. Just a man.

B. How many people in our world would answer this question in the same way?

1. For some, Jesus is a religious figure.
2. For others, Jesus is a myth and legend like Santa Claus.
3. For some in our community, Jesus is someone that their dad or grandma worshipped but he doesn't do anything for them.
4. And still, yet, there are people in our community and in our world who can't answer the question because they have never HEARD the name of Jesus.
 - a. They don't know the Christmas story.
 - b. They don't know about a loving God who came to Earth to die for our sins.
 - c. They know about their pagan gods, they know about their version of Pan, they know about the spirits in the trees and the spirits of their ancestors, but THEY HAVE NO IDEA WHO JESUS IS!

C. Until the world can accurately answer this question of who Jesus is, we have work to do.

1. Before Jesus left this Earth, He said in Matthew 24:14 (NIV)
¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
2. ALL nations, all people, and all the world will hear about Jesus and our job is to go and tell them.

4. We can't testify of something we don't believe.

A. Remember, that Jesus' disciples have been struggling a little bit.

1. People were recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, but the disciples were a little hesitant.
2. They seem to be riding the fence, caught between Jesus as Rabbi and Jesus as the Son of God.
3. Jesus leads His disciples up the several thousand feet incline towards Caesarea Phillipi and leads them to the infamous cave of Pan.

B. From Matthew and Luke, we get the picture that Jesus leads his disciples to a large cave.

1. He sits them down and asks "Who do you say that I am?"
2. The day has come, when the question is put forth in an undeniable way.
3. Jesus doesn't want to know what the gossip is, what the prevailing opinion says, or anything else.
4. WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

C. And Peter, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, says you are the Christ, the Son of God!!!!

1. Matthew records Jesus telling Peter that this idea wasn't from him but was revealed by the Holy Spirit.
2. That's because a **declaration of faith must have supernatural beginnings.**
 - a. People don't proclaim Jesus on their own.
 - b. Our sinfulness fights this.
 - c. Our minds are wrecked by sin and none of us are creative enough to profess Jesus as our Savior on our own.
3. Jesus was bringing His disciples to a critical place in their spiritual journey:

- a. The place of the profession.
- b. The place of profession is the place where, with the Holy Spirit's help, we see Jesus for who he really is.
- c. This day, Jesus led His disciples to this place.

D. Today, if you are struggling with who Jesus is, you are in familiar territory.

1. Every person who now believes in Jesus has been where you are.
2. Wondering if Jesus is real, if Jesus is more than a historical figure if Jesus really is the Savior of the world.
 - a. Some of us overcome that place in a matter of moments.
 - b. Others wrestled for years.
3. *But if you want to get off that hump to the place where you can proudly and confidently say, "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God", then the Holy Spirit will help you do exactly that.*
4. We all need this supernatural moment because:

5. The profession of Faith is the rock of Christianity.

Matthew 16:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

A. Jesus tells Peter that He will use proclamations of faith like this to build His church.

1. Jesus is building a church.
2. He is building it not upon fancy buildings, creativity, or personality.
3. The Church is being built upon the supernatural revealing and proclamation of Jesus.

B. At the end of today's service, we are going to ask you to commit to praying, sending, and giving to missions.

1. When you give to missions, you are participating in the revealing of Jesus in our world.

2. **From the campuses of Universities to the Red-Light districts, and everywhere in-between, we are to go and be used by Jesus to build the church.**

C. **We are to build the Church at the expense of enemy territory!**

1. What is at stake is more than money and budgets, but the very souls of people, communities, and nations.

2. Paul said in Romans 8 that people can't believe in someone they have never heard of and that we have a responsibility to GO and Tell the world about Jesus.

D. Pastor, won't it be hard? YES.

1. Pastor, it will be expensive! Yes.

2. Pastor, it will be costly. Yes.

3. Pastor, we will face resistance, persecution, and loss. Yes!

4. **How can we confidently send and go into a world that is so dark, evil, and broken?**

6. The Answer is that Jesus Promises the Success of His Mission.

A. Jesus is the one who said He will build His church.

1. We all have parts to play.

2. We must be willing to do what God has called us to do.

a. We must be willing, faithful, and obedient.

b. We must be filled with the Spirit and the Word of God.

3. But Jesus said HE would build His Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

B. Remember the setting of where this conversation is happening.

1. Jesus and the disciples are at the mouth of a cave dedicated to the worship of "Pan".

a. They were in the heart of enemy territory.

b. Not only that, the place Jesus had led them just so happened to be called, "the gates of Hades".

2. *Let me share with you some background information from Ray Vander Laan:ⁱ*

To the pagan mind, the cave at Caesarea Philippi created a gate to the underworld, where fertility gods lived during the winter. They committed detestable acts to worship these false gods.

Caesarea Philippi's location was especially unique because it stood at the base of a cliff where spring water flowed. At one time, the water ran directly from the mouth of a cave set in the bottom of the cliff.

The pagans of Jesus' day commonly believed that their fertility gods lived in the underworld during the winter and returned to earth each spring. They saw water as a symbol of the underworld and thought that their gods traveled to and from that world through caves.

To the pagan mind, then, the cave and spring water at Caesarea Philippi created a gate to the underworld. They believed that their city was literally at the gates of the underworld gates of hell. In order to entice the return of their god, Pan, each year, the people of Caesarea Philippi engaged in horrible deeds, including prostitution and sexual interaction between humans and goats.

When Jesus brought his disciples to the area, they must have been shocked. Caesarea Philippi was like a red-light district in their world and devout Jews would have avoided any contact with the despicable acts committed there.

It was a city of people eagerly knocking on the doors of hell.

C. *Jesus led his disciples to a place that, in the minds of the ancients, represented the entrance to Hell.*

a. Behind Jesus was a visible representation of all that was evil and wrong.

b. Sexual sin, blood sacrifice, Greek gods, Roman gods, evil spirits, and demonic activity were represented in this cave.

c. The hopelessness of humanity, the depravity of humanity, the lostness of humanity was symbolized here at Caesarea Phillippi.

d. Our worst fears, our worst enemies, our worst nightmares were presented that day.

D. And guess what?

a. Jesus declared that none of those things will stand!

b. **We can go into the world and preach the Gospel because our biggest fears, enemies, and obstacles cannot stand up to the power of Jesus!**

c. Through Jesus, we will beat down the Gates of the enemy that has enslaved our world and our minds.

a. There will be cost, there will be a sacrifice, and there will be blood.

b. But the blood of Jesus has conquered death, hell, and the grave.

E. **It is time that the followers of Jesus stop complaining about how big and how tall the gates are protecting enemy territory, and it is time that we start tearing them down.**

a. Jesus told His disciples that nothing will stand up to his power.

b. **Darkness cannot stay, evil will not last, and Satan will not win as we REVEAL Jesus to our world.**

7. We are seeing the Gates of Hell fall.

A. I love hearing the stories and testimonies about what God is doing here in Licking, MO and Texas County.

1. Lives are being changed.
2. Good is happening.
3. We have a long way to go and we are committed to doing whatever the Lord asks of us in order to see strongholds fall in our community.

B. As a Church, **We are committed to seeing the Gates of Hell fall wherever they are established.**

1. This weekend we have heard from those called to Vanuatu, to the University campus, to the Red-light districts, and many other places.
2. And the story is the same: **They are taking Jesus to the Gates of Hell and demanding them to fall.**
3. I want to be part of that!
4. Every time I pray for a missionary and I give to missions, I am echoing the words of Ronald Reagan, "Tear Down This Wall".
5. But better than the words of President Reagan are the words of Jesus, and His promise that "The Gates of Hades WILL FALL"

C. If you want to invest in something that is guaranteed to win, give to missions.

1. Invest in people who are revealing Jesus in our world.
2. God has called them, and He is calling us to help send them to the dark places and to give them the Light of Jesus.

Closing:

A. Today, I want to close this part of our service in two parts.

1. First, I want us to take a few moments to pray and ask God to use us here in Licking, MO.

- a. Let us pray for the lost.
- b. Let us pray for the Spirit to fill us and equip us to speak to the enemy's walls and see them fall.
- c. Let us pray for the Lord to use us, Licking A/G, to expand the Kingdom of God in the vilest of places.

2. Then we are going to pray and ask the Lord what He will have us to give to missions this year.

- a. A faith moment where we, as individuals and families, covenant to believe and sacrifice so that those in enemy territory might know Jesus.
- b. Then we are going to fill out our faith-promise cards, and celebrate the largest commitment to missions in this church's history.

ⁱ <https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/gates-of-hell-article> Accessed 10/3/2018