



## ▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

**Saturday/Sunday, 7/7-8/2018**  
**Series: The Story of the People**  
**“The Story of a Church”**

### **Matthew 16:13-20**

*When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 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. 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. 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." Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.*

**Family Activity:** In the Bible we find many names for God and for Jesus. As a family, see how many you can find or remember. One fun way to do this would be to take the names and play a game of Pictionary, “Headbandz” or Charades.

Discuss:

- Which name for God do you use the most? Why?
- Who do you say Jesus is?
- How would you talk to someone else about who Jesus is?

**Monday, 7/9/2018**  
**“Who Do You Say I Am?”**

One of the most insightful books I have read, and continue to reference is *When You Pray: Thinking Your Way into God's World* by Douglas John Hall. The premise for the book is “all Christian prayer is through Jesus Christ.” (pg. 13) This is his response to Jesus’ question that is addressed to all disciples (including us): “But every Christian, whether minister or layperson, whether highly educated in the subtleties of theology or professionally untutored, must have some image of Jesus and some guiding sense of who it is that he or she has promised to follow.” (pg. 13)

- Who do you say Jesus is?
- What is your “guiding sense” of who it is that you have promised to follow?

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank you for giving Jesus to the world. Sometimes I struggle to know who he is, and where to find him. Open my eyes to see Jesus. Open my ears to hear his voice. In Jesus' name, prepare my heart to be surprised. Amen.

**Tuesday, 7/10/2018**

**“What Does Jesus Mean to You?”**

**Matthew 16:16**

*Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

Before we can talk about what Jesus means to us, we must be able to answer the question, who do we think Jesus is? Simon Peter answers, *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

Hall present four images of Christ. The first is the divine Jesus. I call this image of Jesus the “Calgon, take me away Jesus” (from the commercial with someone in a bathtub full of bubbles floating away to a peaceful, quiet, serene place). The divine Jesus is the one who doesn't encourage us to live in the world, but to live only focused on some other place – heaven. This Jesus is pictured with a halo, not a thorn of crowns.

- Is the divine Jesus your “guiding sense?”
- How does this image of Jesus fit with Simon Peter's response? Is the divine Jesus the Messiah (the one who saves)? Is the divine Jesus an image of a “living God”?

**Prayer:** Dear God, I want to know Jesus. I want to be in relationship with Jesus. I want to feel his presence in my heart, to guide me on the right path. Amen.

**Wednesday, 7/11/2018**

**“What Does Jesus Mean to You?”**

**Matthew 16:16**

*Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

The third image of Jesus is “the conquering Jesus.” This is the “Onward, Christian Soldiers” Jesus. He is the militant who fights for US, and against OUR enemies (according to who we identify). When we follow this Jesus we fight – against those different than ourselves. We are energized by the battle of doing what we believe is right – at the expense of others.

Similar to the conquering Jesus is the judging Jesus. This is the angry Jesus who comes to destroy the world as it is. He comes to wipe out those who are not followers. The hope we place in this Jesus is that we will escape the rapture.

- Where do you see the militant Jesus present in our world?
- Is this the image of Jesus you put your trust in?

**Prayer:** Pray for the person on your right. Pray for the person on your left. Pray for someone different from you. Pray for yourself. ALL in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Thursday, 7/12/2018**

**“What Does Jesus Mean to You?”**

**Matthew 16:16**

*Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16)*

The last image Hall offers us is the accepting Jesus. He writes: “Sloganized, domesticated, thoroughly housebroken, ‘Jesus loves me’ becomes: Jesus likes me, accepts me, and makes no great demands upon me. Jesus loves me, and loves us, just as we are.” (pg. 27) Really? Does Jesus love us as we are, “with our ambitions, our material acquisitiveness, our drives for power, recognition, and popular acceptance all intact?” (pg. 29)

- What might Jesus not be pleased with?
- If we sing the first verse of “Jesus loves me,” it begs the question: If we believe the little ones (children) belong to Jesus, how will they experience God’s love and strength through us?

**Prayer:** (from the Communion liturgy) (UMH, pg. 8)

Merciful God,

We confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have failed to be an obedient church.

We have not done your will,

we have broken your law,

we have rebelled against your love,

we have not loved our neighbors,

and we have not heard the cry of the needy.

Forgive us, we pray.

Free us for joyful obedience,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

**Friday, 7/13/2018**

**“Who Do You Say I Am?”**

**Matthew 16:15 and John 17:15**

*"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"*

*My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.*

How we think about Jesus is the foundation for how we live and how we pray. Each one of the concepts we have looked at this week seem to distort some of the main points of the gospel. We see this distortion most clearly in how the world is perceived. “The first approach encourages world denial and evasion of creaturely responsibility; the second a triumphalistic bid for worldly power; the third outright rejection of the created order; and the fourth an uncritical acceptance of the status quo.” (pg. 30)

There are, of course, other images of Jesus. I believe God invites us on a path with a guiding sense that Jesus is the transforming Christ. “To transform something means to change its form, shape, direction; to turn it towards a different goal; to reorient it. Jesus does not want to take us out of the world, he wants to put us into it with a different vision (see John 17:15). Jesus does not intend that we conquer the world, but that we befriend it.”

Jesus calls us to a way of living where we see the pain, suffering and oppression of world so *that* we can participate with Christ in transforming hearts, minds and lives. Peter gets it right when he calls Jesus the Messiah, the one who comes to save.

- When you pray, “in Jesus’ name,” what are you praying for?
- What are some different names used for Jesus? How do these names change your prayers?

We live on a fairly clean street, with most yards well-kept. Most of us don’t have fences, so there is a lot of open space. Our next-door neighbor has fish aquariums in his driveway, along with his most recently used tools. He has more vehicles than drivers, and mows about once a month. Neighbors have reported him to the city several times.

Our neighbor (and good friend) across the street is really annoyed by this guy’s yard and even planted a tree to block the view from his favorite reading spot on the porch. As he started on a rant last week, I said, “What would happen if you told yourself he was doing the best he can do?” His response startled me. He said he would be lying to himself if he said that. I didn’t know what to say.

After thinking about this for a few days, this is my response: It’s not easy to let go of our egos and let Jesus transform us, for the transformation of the world.

**Prayer:**

**I Want Jesus To Walk With Me**

I want Jesus to walk with me,  
I want Jesus to walk with me,  
All along my pilgrim journey,  
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my trials, Lord, walk with me,  
In my trials, Lord, walk with me,  
When the shades of life are falling,  
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my troubles, Lord walk with me,  
In my troubles, Lord walk with me,  
When my head is bowed in sorrow,  
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

***This week’s devotions were written by  
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