

Fifth Sunday After Pentecost

June 27, 2010

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Luke 9:18-22

Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

It is important to speak clearly so others understand you. That is just a good rule of any communication. But even more so there is a need to speak clearly when the subject and details are very vital. You don't want to speak in vague terms to someone when giving directions or the person you are helping is bound to get lost. You don't want to just get it close enough when it comes to writing down a person's email or your message will never get through to them.

But there is something that makes communicating clearly even more important and challenging. Confusion. When there is a lot of misunderstanding and uncertainty over a subject the teaching needs to be clear and concise. When people are distracted, when there is one person saying one thing and another saying another and a third chiming in with yet another opinion it can get pretty confusing. Have you ever had two or three people trying to tell you how to get somewhere at the same time and your head starts to spin a bit?

This morning we have an ultimate example of speaking clearly during a time of confusion. We have a subject that is more important than any other. We have a subject that gets very misunderstood. Jesus. As we look at this lesson from Luke I pray we learn to: **Confess Christ clearly amidst the confusion.**

There was a lot of confusion over Jesus. After Jesus miraculously fed the 5000 men, not even counting the women and children, many wanted to make Jesus a king by force. They had entertained hopes that Jesus would reestablish Israel as the political power it was at one time. But when Jesus started making it clear He was not this kind of king and began talking in what was spiritual babble to many, John's gospel tells us that ***"many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him."*** So Jesus takes His chosen disciples in private and prays as He so often did. This is a serious moment. Jesus wants to hear what the disciples confess concerning him, but before he asks them, he asks ***"Who do the crowds say that I am?"***

The disciples reply with some of the many rumors they have heard. ***"Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."*** The disciples point out that there is much debate and confusion regarding Jesus' identity. These answers reveal the people's lack of knowledge and understanding. They also show that people can have a very high opinion

of Jesus, but at the same time fail to truly understand who Jesus is and the work Jesus came to do.

But now Jesus wanted to hear what His disciples had to say about Him. Amid all this confusion, what did they think? ***“But what about you?” He asked. “Who do you say that I am?”*** Literally, the Greek reads with greater emphasis, ***“But you, who do you say that I am?”*** Peter, speaking for the group, hits the nail right on the head. ***Peter answered, “You are the Christ of God.”*** While much of the world is confused, there is no doubt in the minds of the disciples who Jesus is - He is more than some prophet or forerunner. He is the Christ. Christ is the New Testament word for the Old Testament word Messiah. Both Messiah and Christ mean *“the anointed one.”* Jesus is the One God promised way back in the Garden of Eden - the One all the prophets spoke about. Jesus is the One God anointed to carry out His plan and bring salvation to all people.

Amidst the confusion Peter correctly identifies Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. What a clear confession! Immediately, Jesus reveals, for the first time as recorded by Luke to His disciples, His mission as the Christ. ***“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed.”*** Christ came to suffer many things. He came to face rejection. He came to die. Jesus would suffer many things, be rejected, and die because of our sins. On the cross Christ would suffer God’s wrath because of our guilt. These things must happen to Christ because God demands payment for sin. That is why Christ came - to make the payment we could not make with His perfect life and innocent suffering and death. But Jesus also knows His work as Christ will not end in defeat or sorrow. He knows that He ***“on the third day will be raised to life.”*** He will defeat the devil, sin, death, and hell. Through His death and resurrection He will win life and freedom for all people. This is who Jesus is as the Christ - the Savior of all.

Yet, there was still so much confusion over what Peter and these disciples rightly confessed that Jesus even warns them to keep it to themselves for now. The time will come when Jesus will send them out to the world. Then they will confess Christ clearly to the world amidst the confusion. And so should we? Is there still confusion today over who Jesus is and what Jesus came to earth to do? Are there still many different opinions about Jesus in our world today? If we went around asking the question “Who is Jesus?,” we might be surprised to see that not much has changed. In fact, I asked that question on the internet and found all kinds of answers. Some say Jesus was simply a man. Others think of Jesus as a prophet or a teacher. Others see Him only as a great example. I saw one person say Jesus was the first Buddhist who was able to reach his full potential. I’ve heard Jesus called a social reformer, a pacifist, a great miracle worker, and even a vegetarian. Jesus has also been called a deceiver, liar, and demon.

Yet, with all of this confusion and chaos, in the middle of so much misunderstanding and uncertainty, Jesus still turns to people like you and me who know Him by faith and asks ***“But you, who do you say that I am?”*** Just as the Holy Spirit revealed to Peter and the disciples, He has revealed to us the great truth. Jesus is the Christ. He is God’s Son. He is my Savior from sin. He is the One who suffered and died in my place. He is my one and only ticket to heaven. How important this is dear friends to confess. May we confess this clearly. May we confess it daily. May God give us the strength to confess Jesus as the Christ not just with words, but with our lives.

This is not a day and an age to give vague answers or to just come close enough. People need to know exactly who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. There is not a question more important in the world than the one Jesus puts before us this morning when He says: "*Who do you say that I am?*" Knowing this is the difference between heaven and hell. Jesus is the Christ. He is God's Son. He is Savior. May we confess this truth clearly amidst the confusion. Amen.