

So, before we even get in the text, I want to give you, I don't know, this might be a geeky thing, but in the Gospel of Matthew, most of the time he doesn't say where Jesus is. He doesn't necessarily give a physical space. He says he's traveling, he's on the road, whatever, but today notice that he tells you where Jesus is. It's in Sarea Philippi. And I think that's important to note because that space was known for just an abundance of pagan gods and it was also a stronghold of the Roman government and in this space, Jesus chose to tell the people that the church will go on no matter what the world is like.

So, to me, that gives us hope. In this world that we live in that feels like there are so many things that aren't right, we are reminded that God's message of hope and love and mercy breaks through and breaks in no matter where we're living or how we're living. So that's just a little. If you're in a trivia game, you'll have the answer now.

But let's get to the story.

Jesus first asked the disciples, "Who does the audience here say that I am?" And you heard in the text that they say he's a rabbi and he's Jeremiah. He's one of the prophets. You heard all of the lists. But then Jesus, in his normal way, gets to the heart of the matter. "But who do you say I am?" Forget what everybody else says about me. Who do you say that I am?

Peter always seems to be the one who's out there with the first answer. He reminds me of the kid in the classroom that always raises his hand first for the question. Peter says, "Jesus, you are the Messiah," which means the anointed one. "You are the son of God."

Yay, Peter, this time you got it right. And Jesus is very happy that Peter must have been listening these last few years as he had been walking with Jesus. And he tells Peter that on this rock, I will build the church. And if you read the commentary, some people see Peter as the rock and others see his confession as the rock. I probably go toward the side of seeing that the confession that Jesus is the Son of God, the Anointed One, the one who brings the kingdom of God forward is where the foundation of the church lies on.

Because think about it, if the foundation of the church lies on any one of us, it's going to crumble because of our humanity. But if it lies on the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, the Anointed One, the one who died for our salvation, it can live.

What you heard in the children's sermon is the question I ask each of us today. Who do you, who do we say that Jesus is? You know, every Sunday we formally confess what we believe in the words of the Apostles' Creed. I chose to read the Nicene Creed to you today of who we say Jesus is. It's more of an unpacked version of who Jesus is.

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So this is what we say we believe: "In one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from light, from God light, from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father, through whom all things were made, and for us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and the kingdom will have no end."

So we like Peter confess our words that Jesus is the anointed one, the son of God.

But then my question as I put to Riley is do our lives reflect what we confess?

There is a quote attributed St. Francis of Assisi's that says, "Preach the gospel always and if necessary, if necessary, use words."

Christ has built the foundation of his church on love and mercy and grace and if we aren't living that out in our daily life, we are falling short of the glory of God. Now please know that we all fall short at times. You know, I'm going to give you a spoiler alert in case you want to worship St. Mattress next week instead of come to church.

The gospel next week is going to be Peter being told by Jesus, "Satan, get behind me." So Peter one week is being told, wow, you're amazing. You understand what it means to follow me and who I am. And then next week he's going to be called Satan. So there's proof that we all fall short, but the good news is that God forgives us and invites us back and invites us to ask the question, who do we say Jesus is?

And if we say he is the Son of God, how do we live that out?

When I served in Fort Worth, Texas, there was a young man who was a student at Dallas Theological Seminary. And every once in a while, he would come visit St. Matthew's and he had a very very severe crippling of almost all of his limbs and he needed crutches to get by and there was only one hand that worked and just amazing that he could get around and you looked at him and you wondered how could he even exist but then he opened his mouth and you saw his heart and the light of Jesus shine through his life.

So, he shared his story about when he was born, he wasn't even allowed to come into the family's house because they thought he was unclean because you know there are some places that still think if you are sick, you have an evil spirit so he had literally a cage outside his house in which he lived and his African name translated into English actually meant dog.

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He would tell of the challenges of life and then he would get to this one part of his story and again his eyes would light up, and he would get the biggest smile on his face.

And this part of his story is when a woman of the evening took him in, gave him a place to live, gave him food, and cared for him.

He tells this part of his story that this is where he really learned who Jesus was and is and what it looked like for a person to live a life that confesses Jesus as the core of their life.

Words are nice. Words are important. Confession is good. Sharing our faith verbally is good. But our actions need to reflect our faith.

May the Holy Spirit give us the power to live a life where words, the gospel is preached always, where words are not that necessary, but they know you love Jesus by your actions. Amen.