

the
HARBINGER
open minds open hearts

VOLUME LXXIII | August 23, 2020 | No. 15

From the Pews, Jim Gettys

Matthew 16: 13-20
What do you say?

This powerful passage, I think perfectly illustrates the relationship that Christ asks each of us to consider. It comes after several verses in which Jesus implored his disciples not to be led astray by the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Although these learned and deeply religious individuals understood the Law, they did not understand what and who Christ is. They did not perceive why he came into the world nor how he hopes to relate to each of us.

Maybe this set of verses appeals to me because it echoes the question and answer style that our own PC (USA) Catechism takes. As Presbyterians and in the Reformed tradition, we all value the concept of the Priesthood of all Believers. We are not afraid to question our style of worship, our approach and interpretation of the scriptures, and even our ministers to better understand how Christ speaks to us through the Word. A questioning approach to worship ensures that we are engaged, present, and thoughtful as we approach the altar. It does not allow one to easily "drift along" in the emotion of the moment nor in the beauty of the service.

In our reading for today, Christ first enjoins his disciples to state who "They" say that he is. After they answer however, he quickly turns the question to Simon Peter, and as an extension, to all of us as individuals. "But what about you?" Christ asks each of us to answer on our own behalf. Our relationship with Christ, although supported by our Heavenly Father and revealed by the Holy Spirit, must be an intimate one. Jesus shows us here that he wants to know each of us and have us claim him. You have to say it!

I think that one of the most important facets of claiming Jesus as the Christ and as our Lord and Savior is that it gives us a clear Ideal towards which to strive. As the disciples replied to Jesus, we could choose any number of individuals to follow. They named many devout and holy men, who although respected, righteous, and worthy, do not embody the hope, love, and peace that Christ offers us in the Good News. In claiming Christ as the Son of the living God, each one of us, we may with Peter be given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ assures us, as he assures Peter, that in claiming him for who and what he is and in setting him as our own personal Ideal that we will have a powerful and meaningful influence to work Christ's plan on the earth. In doing that Christ assures us that our influence will transcend this world and be "loosed in Heaven."

I pray that we may all seek Christ as our Ideal, and in claiming him strive to work his good in this world, and the next.



WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sunday, August 23, 2020 | online, 10:00a | Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost



Preparation for Worship

"No sacrifice which a lover would make for his beloved is too great for us to make for our enemy."
—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Gathering and Preparing for God's Word

Prelude *Of the Father's Love Begotten* arr. Lasky

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Our help is from God, who made heaven and earth.

If God were not on our side, we could not live.

If God were not for us, we would be swept away.

God has gifted each one of us in unique ways.

We lift up the variety of gifts in our midst.

We rejoice in God's love and faithfulness.

In thankfulness, we come before God.

We are here, seeking to discern God's will.

We are open to God's transforming Spirit.

Hymn #10 *Sing Glory to the Name of God* LASST UNS ERFREUEN

See hymn sheet.

Morning Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

Hearing God's Word

Prayer for Illumination

Gospel Lesson, *Matthew 16:13-20*

Epistle Lesson, *Romans 12:1-2*

Sermon "What Will the Future Hold?"

Anthem *He Comes to Us as One Unknown* arr. Ferguson

Responding to God's Word

Affirmation of Faith, from *A Brief Statement of Faith*

We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God.

Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:

preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed and blessing the children,
healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.

Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition, Jesus was crucified,
suffering the depths of human pain and giving his life for the sins
of the world.

God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.

Prayer of Dedication

Hymn #269 *Lead On, O King Eternal* LANCASHIRE

See hymn sheet.

Charge and Benediction

Postlude *Christus Paradox* Ferguson

Leading Worship this Morning

Ben Dorr, *preaching*

Mary Kathleen Duncan, *liturgist*

Dale Comer, *lay reader*

Nancy Smith, *organist*

Diana Dailey, Katie Knauer, Derek Pitman, Mark Kemp, *vocalists*

10 Sing Glory to the Name of God

(Psalm 29)

Unison

1 Sing glo - ry to the name of God, whose ho - ly splen - dor shines a -
 2 The name of God is full of might: re - sound - ing thun - der, flash - ing
 3 The name of God is wild and free, a - whirl in ho - ly mys - ter -
 4 May God for - ev - er be our peace; may hymns of glo - ry nev - er

Harmony *Unison*

broad. En - throned a - bove the
 light. The wil - der - ness can -
 y. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! A se - cret wrapped in
 cease: Let all the faith - ful

crash - ing waves, the God of grace and glo - ry saves.
 not con - tain the ech - oes of the great re - frain:
 smoke and fire, still chant - ed by the tem - ple choir:
 peo - ple come; sing praise to God, the Three - in - One:

This sweeping paraphrase of Psalm 29 conveys a sense of the Jewish reverence for the sheer power of God's name, regarded as too holy for mortal tongues to pronounce. In keeping with its appointment for Trinity Sunday, the final stanza gives the psalm a Christian interpretation.

269 Lead On, O King Eternal!

1 Lead on, O King e - ter - nal! The day of march has come;
 2 Lead on, O King e - ter - nal, till sin's fierce war shall cease,
 3 Lead on, O King e - ter - nal: we fol - low, not with fears,

hence - forth in fields of con - quest your tents shall be our home.
 and ho - li - ness shall whis - per the sweet a - men of peace;
 for glad - ness breaks like morn - ing wher - e'er your face ap - pears;

Through days of prep - a - ra - tion your grace has made us strong,
 for not with swords' loud clash - ing, nor roll of stir - ring drums;
 your cross is lift - ed o'er us; we jour - ney in its light.

and now, O King e - ter - nal, we lift our bat - tle song.
 with deeds of love and mer - cy the heaven - ly king - dom comes.
 The crown a - waits the con - quest; lead on, O God of might!

Not everything that looks like a battle ends up being one. This text, written for a seminary graduation, works well with its martial tune in the first stanza; but later stanzas turn from such imagery and focus on "deeds of love and mercy" and courage for life's journey.